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The individualistic gospel







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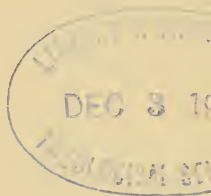
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# The Individualistic Gospel

## And Other Essays

By  
ANDREW GILLIES



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## PREFATORY NOTE

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Henry Holt & Co.: On Some of Life's Ideals, William James.

Longmans, Green & Co.: Varieties of Religious Experience, William James.

The Century Company: Reminiscences of Tolstoy, Count Ilya Tolstoy.

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Harper & Bros.: Short History of the English People, Green; Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

E. P. Dutton & Co.: Lectures on Preaching, the Rt. Rev. Phillips Brooks, D.D.

The Association Press: The Social Principles of Jesus, Walter Rauschenbusch.

Cassell and Company: Can We Still Follow Jesus? Principal Garvie.

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The Methodist Book Concern: The Methodist Review.

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A. G.

## CHAPTER I

# CONCERNING "THE CHALLENGE OF THE CHURCH"

There are more stoics in the army than we commonly think. But this austerity of outlook, even if it were within the capacity of everybody, is wholly satisfying to nobody. And the same must be said of a resolute cult of natural beauty sustained by some of the more gifted and poetical minds (like Alan Seeger for example), with a certain greatness of will which still fails to conceal from others or from themselves the heart full of pain beneath, unreconciled and unconvinced.—*William E. Hocking.*

The Christian life is the life of Christ in the believer. There never was but one Christian life and that is Christ's life. I am not playing with words. If anyone chooses to say that men can be Christians though they do not believe in Christ nor accept him as a Saviour—very well! But they are not Christians in the New Testament sense of that word.—*J. Le Moyne Danner.*

The more literally lost you are, the more literally you are the very being whom Christ's sacrifice has already saved. Nothing in Catholic theology, I imagine, has ever spoken to sick souls as straight as this message from Luther's personal experience. As Protestants are not all sick souls, reliance on what Luther exults in calling the dung of one's merits, the filthy puddle of one's own righteousness, has come to the front again in their religion; but the adequacy of his view of Christianity to the deeper wants of our human mental structure is shown by its wildfire contagiousness when it was a new and quickening thing.—*William James.*

Upon a rational and nonmiraculous experience no church can live, and a nation must sin to die. Nor, on the other hand, can the soul live on mere miracle, on the merely unintelligible. The church can exist neither on a classicism nor on a romanticism, but on a new creation. It can live only upon what created it—upon the miracle of grace, upon the evangelical experience of men new created by God's word and gift, on the conversion which, as Goodwin says, is the standing miracle in the church. . . . The church must choose its foundation principle from these two and regulate the nature of its comprehension accordingly—idealism with moral atony or redemption with conscience in command of the social life.—*P. T. Forsyth.*

## CHAPTER I

### CONCERNING "THE CHALLENGE OF THE CHURCH"

A GREAT deal is being said and written just now about "the challenge of the church." And there may well be, for there is a subtle and invisible something of which that favorite phrase is the best possible expression. It seems to me, however, that the peril in the situation lies in the failure to understand just what that something is. Usually it is presented as an unparalleled opportunity, the compulsion to heroic endeavor created by the impending task of world reconstruction. And, of course, that is true as far as it goes, but the fact is that it does not go far enough. Like a great deal of superficial diagnosis, it deals with symptoms, not causes. The real challenge deals with causes and, rightly understood, gives hope of permanent effects.

Let me illustrate what I mean. One morning I picked up two papers from my den table. One was *The Stars and Stripes*, the official publication of the American Expeditionary Force, in France. It contained an editorial entitled "Salvation," in

which the editor, after berating a speaker at one of the halls for asking those of his hearers who wanted to come to God to stand up, went on to say:

"There are a good many men in the army who hold the belief that a man who, with a gun in his hand and a smile on his face, takes his chance in the battle line in this war, who faces death for the principles for which we are fighting, is working out his salvation and does not need to stand up in a back hall. . . . And we have chaplains, men in army khaki and steel helmets and gas masks, men who stand at our side in the front line—men of God, if ever there have been—who not only hold, but were the first to express this conviction."

The other paper was *The Christian Advocate*, and it happened to contain an address entitled "Advice to a Soldier," written by John Wesley, published in pamphlet form and distributed among the British army camps in 1743. In that address the human founder of Methodism lays before his readers the alternatives of salvation or damnation, heaven or hell, and in no uncertain terms says that the conditions of salvation for a soldier on the battlefield are just what they are for any other man, namely, repentance for sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It would be exceedingly interesting to isolate

the Stars and Stripes' claim and examine it frankly. Does the act of fighting in a good cause automatically put a man on good terms with God and assure him of salvation, in spite of the fact that he has no conscious faith, and regardless of his personal character? Dr. W. E. Hocking, of Harvard, deals with it from the standpoint of a philosopher and refuses to be caught in the rising tide of emotionalism. He says:

“We shall not find the genuine elements of hope in the situation by glossing over its sobering traits, nor yet by succumbing to the temptation to say that the soldier is subconsciously religious. . . . *A religion that a man does not know he has is of no importance.*” (The italics are mine.)

It is more to the purpose, however, to take the editorial, raw as it is, and John Wesley's address, blunt as it sounds in this age of soft phrases, as representative of two schools of thought in modern religion and two ways of entering upon the vast work of reconstruction between which the church must, in a very real sense, make a choice.

The term “liberal” is just as good as any other with which to designate the one school. Probably one ought to say “schools,” for it is made up of a series of intellectual movements rather than of one. Its rationalistic aspect has been well described by Dr. J. H. Odell in the words: “Every minister knows that from the days of Ferdinand

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Christian Baur, founder of the Tübingen school, down to the latest word from P. W. Schmiedel, there has been a patient, indefatigable and relentless effort to squeeze every possible trace of the supernatural from the Old and New Testaments." Another aspect of it consists of the radical application of the evolutionary hypothesis to the moral and spiritual worlds, substituting an upward thrust of all things, in whose beneficent results every man shares, for a world of contending forces in which every man's destiny depends upon his conscious personal choice. It is true that there are those who believe in both, but that does not materially affect the situation. Another aspect has been greatly intensified by the war. It is represented by modern sentimentalism, the refusal to face the stern facts of an ethical universe; by the vague feeling, not only on the part of many enlisted men, but multitudes of others, that "God will not be too hard on them, whatever happens." And yet another aspect is found in the attempted substitution of a spiritual idealism for historical Christianity. In the words of a writer in the Hibbert Journal, "Can a Christ ideal, identified with the true, the good, and the beautiful, be substituted for the historical person of Jesus Christ, without fundamentally overturning Christianity as a spiritual religion?"

The other position is what has always been

known as evangelical Christianity. That it has undergone radical changes since Wesley's time is a mere truism. Many of the beliefs of a prescientific age have been done away with entirely. Some of the basic doctrines have been greatly modified in form. In the words of one of its most advanced exponents, “We now see creation, revelation, atonement and salvation as processes rather than as separate facts, though there are great outstanding facts as parts of the process, as distinct registers of a given advance.” Moreover, its spirit and method are fast changing. It is conceded that truth is dynamic, not static; that saving faith is not acquiescence in a dogma about Christ, but a vital trust in Christ, and that there is room on the evangelical foundation for wide differences of opinion on subsidiary matters. But the essence of this gospel is permanent. Man is not merely imperfect. He is stained by sin and held blameworthy by a holy God, who has written the infinite consequences of sin into the very fiber of his being. Jesus Christ is not evolution's finest product or the world's greatest saint, but the world's only Saviour, who atoned on Calvary for man's sin. Salvation is a spiritual rebirth, brought about by conscious repentance and faith, and, conversely, by a beneficent work of grace wrought in the personality by the Holy Spirit. And so the saved man is not the same man grown

to nobler proportions. He is a new man, living a new life in a new universe. Those are but imperfect statements, but the eternal verities for which they stand constitute the heart of the gospel on the evangelical foundation, that part which the vicissitudes of time cannot change or destroy.

Now, it seems perfectly obvious that this interpretation of God, Christ, life, and human destiny is absolutely contradictory to the varying interpretations of the intellectual movement or movements at which we have glanced. The man who believes in salvation by culture or the unconscious assimilation of an all-pervasive spirit of goodness and the man who believes in salvation by a definite and conscious adventure of faith, by personal oneness with a personal Saviour, are not traveling the same intellectual road, with one just a bit in advance of the other. They are traveling in opposite directions and between them is "a great gulf fixed." A compromise between the two points of view is as impossible as it was between the two civilizations so lately locked in a death grapple on the battle fields of Europe and Asia. And yet the astounding thing is that both are found in adjoining pews and in neighboring pulpits of the same denomination. "The privilege of taking one's creed in a figurative sense has done yeoman service in the cause of church cohesion. Those

who regard God as a name, solemn style, for the fortunate legality of events in nature, or for the upward trend of organic evolution, find themselves joined in apparent fellowship with those for whom God is still a personal will, and so forth.” Or, in the words of a doughty protagonist of intelligent evangelicalism: “Two streams meet in our contemporary Christianity, and however they may keep the same bed in the current reach of history’s stream, they do not blend.”

The forced option presented to the church by this anomalous situation seems to me to constitute the real challenge with which the church is met to-day. Three years ago P. T. Forsyth, in an article in the Methodist Review, said: “We must decide whether our faith rests on a new creation or an immanent evolution; whether the Christian experience is a thing entirely *per se* (and autonomous accordingly, though not unrelated to the rest of experience), or whether it is a sectional product of spiritual humanity and cosmic evolution at an ideal height; whether it be produced by the direct, mystic, alogical and miraculous action of an invasive God on our soul, or only indirectly by the ordered immanence of an emerging God, which is shared by the whole world as the area of his high causation.”

The course of events has magnified the meaning and broadened the scope of those key words, “We

must decide." Here is no abstruse question in metaphysics, to be decided by cloistered saints, but a tragically practical question, to be decided by a church in action. The very unity for which we pray will compel a decision, for that unity, to be effective, must be real and vital, not pretended. "You never can substitute rhetoric for reality without important results." And the world in chaos, needing deliverance, makes the option compulsory. The crucial question concerning the church to-day is not "Will she undertake the colossal task of attempting to furnish a solid foundation for the new social order?" but "How will she undertake it?" With vague sentimentalizing and meaningless moral platitudes or with "faith's certainties," however unwelcome they may be to some on their sterner side? With a modernized paganism or a plan of salvation rooted in God's recorded revelation of himself and justified by historical experience? With a gospel of social duty or a gospel of individual regeneration? With the comfortable assurance of a Universal Goodness or an urgent summons to choose between the narrow way that leads to life and the broad way that ends in spiritual death? With glittering generalities about a universal "immortality" or the plain preaching of heaven, hell, and the Judgment? With a mess of twaddle about a "spirituality" that means any-

thing from æsthetic idealism to pleasurable nervous reaction to fine weather or the sturdy announcement of justification in its truest and most vital sense? With a Christ ideal, freed from all connection with God’s recorded disclosure of himself, or the passionate presentation of an historical Jesus who is also the eternal Christ? With an offer to imperfect men of salvation by general moral improvement or an offer to lost and sinful men of salvation by faith in an atoning Saviour?

That is the challenge of the church, as I see it. Nothing is to be gained by dismal Jeremiads concerning the result if the church fails to meet the issue squarely. “The course of events is apt to show itself humorously indifferent to the reputation of prophets.” But a brief appeal to history may be both illuminating and stimulating.

The early years of the sixteenth century constituted the hideous climax to a long period of decadence in religion and morals. The whole thing had its roots in the wanton prostitution of the Christian doctrine and ethics. “In what passed for the Christian religion fearful abuses in practice and wretched corruptions in doctrine went hand in hand with superstitions that might well seem incredible.” Martin Luther appealed to the church to meet the situation by cleansing her own Augean stables. His answer was abuse and persecution. In consequence the Protestant

Reformation had its birth and the church was rent in twain. That movement, in its initial stages, was marred by serious blunders, but two things concerning it are worthy of note. The first is that it ushered in a new era in Christian history. The second is that, at its heart, it was a return to the New Testament as the source of doctrine and to salvation by faith as the basis of human hope. With all its faults Protestantism became dynamic because it was born of the doctrines of grace.

The early years of the eighteenth century constituted a period of decadence in morals and religion. In Great Britain a rotten church stood as the impotent bulwark of a rotten social order. Deism and debauchery went hand in hand in the church and out of it. One historian went so far as to say: "All that is restrictively Christian or that is peculiar to Christ is waived and banished and despised." An ordained priest in the Established Church was given the supreme blessing of a conscious experience of Jesus Christ as his Saviour. A heart strangely warmed resulted in a personality made colossal. True to the last to the church of which he was a part, he besought her to sanctify herself in teaching and in practice. Her answer was to close her doors in his face and refuse his unlovely converts a place at her altars. Then, and then only, the Wesleyan revival became

a separatist movement, and the Church of England lived to mourn the fact that she had been so shortsighted. Concerning that movement two things are to be noted. The first is that it changed the channel of Christian history. The second is that it was a return to the supernatural content of the New Testament and the supernatural element in Christian experience. To the barrenness of deism and the partialism of Calvinistic theology John Wesley opposed the vast truths of free grace and salvation by faith, and to a formal and unethical religion he opposed the conscious experience of peace with God by faith in Jesus Christ.

The early years of the twentieth century constituted a period of decadence in morals and religion. Alfred Russel Wallace went so far as to write, “It is not too much to say that our whole system of society is rotten from top to bottom and the social environment as a whole, in relation to our possibilities and claims, is the worst that the world has ever seen.” That period was marked by a growing movement outside the church toward the rejection of all religion and a growing movement inside the church toward a rejection of historical Christianity. Just before he died Brierley recovered from his exceeding optimism, conceded the seriousness of the situation, and said that the whole thing was due to the loss from the church of “the essence, the soul, the root of the

evangelical gospel." That had gone and with it the spiritual dynamic and conquering faith of Protestant Christianity. Therefore, said that keen student of contemporaneous history, the only way to recover that lost power and save the world from irretrievable disaster is for the church to retrace her steps. "The things, the powers by which our fathers won back England to religion are there intact and need only to be used to win a new victory." Whether or not we agree with Brierley as to the exact content of that essential gospel is aside from the question. The fact remains that once more, in a time of crisis and trial, the Church of God has been told which direction she must take to recover her own spiritual health and to minister effectively to a world in moral chaos. Nobody wants a return to outworn dogmas or a bootless attempt to resuscitate long dead formulæ. Everybody realizes that the gospel, to be effective, must be restated in terms of life and made manifest by an experience charged with reality. But again the Church of God can go forward only by going back to Calvary and to him who accomplished death thereon, to the soul of the New Testament doctrine and experience.

Will the church be wise enough to learn by her own mistakes? Will she see the crossroads at which she stands once more and choose the Via Dolorosa? Will her leaders remain unmoved by

the sloppy sentimentalism that threatens to engulf the whole race and the inane demands for the destruction of all dogma? Will they, with fearless unconcern as to consequences and a passionate manifestation of the Christ's spirit, proclaim to all mankind, soldier and civilian, intellectualist, social idealist and plain John Smith, Jesus Christ as the Saviour from sin and the high privilege of salvation by vital faith in him? Not with “a zeal for pure doctrine,” but with that holier mood, “the passion for saving faith,” will the Church of God move steadily forward to the dual goal of vital Christian unity and world victory for our Redeeming Lord? I do not know. Nobody knows. But I do know that, though history does not repeat itself, it does furnish some striking parallels.



**CHAPTER II**  
**OF TRYING TO BE A CHRISTIAN**

I beseech you, in the Lord Jesus, beware of unsound work in the matter of your salvation. Strike hands with Christ, that thereafter there may be no happiness to you but Christ, no hunting for anything but Christ, no bed at night, when death cometh, but Christ.—*Samuel Rutherford.*

Not many weeks intervened when I awoke from a sound sleep at break of day, *conscious that I was a Christian.* That was fifty-six years ago. From that time to this, Jesus Christ has been my personal Saviour.—*Jacob Mills, in a personal letter to the author.*

The very first pulsation of the spiritual life, when we rightly apprehend its significance, is the indication that the division between the Spirit and its object has vanished, that the ideal has become real, that the finite has reached its goal and become suffused with the presence and life of the Infinite.—*Principal Caird.*

This mighty life of God in the soul does not, however, work as a blind force, compelling us ignorantly or involuntarily to act like Christ. On the contrary, the walking like him must come as the result of a deliberate choice, sought in strong desire, accepted of a living will.—*Andrew Murray.*

To become a Christian is to have a new spiritual life enter the human soul, as when a seed with its living germ is planted in the soil. To grow as a Christian is to have this new life, the very life of Christ in us, increase in strength and energy, expelling the evil of the old nature by the force of its own good, and ultimately bringing the affections, the thoughts, the purposes, all the activities of the soul into conformity to Christ. The Christian, in a word, is *born*, not made.—*J. Le Moyne Danner.*

## CHAPTER II

### OF TRYING TO BE A CHRISTIAN

Is there such a thing as "trying to be a Christian," or, as it is usually put, "trying to lead the Christian life"? Usage answers in the affirmative, for the expression is common, in both the interrogative and declarative forms. One cannot travel far in a distinctly religious environment without hearing some men asked if they will try to be Christians and others account for themselves by saying that they are trying. And modern thought would seem to sanction the usage, for the gospel as preached to-day is preeminently a call to service. Christianity is looked upon as a program of social readjustments, an ethical ideal to be attained. Even our own church asks of the candidate for admission, "Will you endeavor to lead a holy life?" And the candidate is expected to answer, "I will endeavor so to do, the Lord being my helper."

The question as included in the church ritual is scripturally correct and eminently wise, for it is but another form of that which Henry Drummond so persistently put to the students at Edin-

burgh—"Gentlemen, do you mean business?" But the phrase, especially as used by so many to explain this relation to God and his kingdom, may well arouse suspicion and provoke inquiry.

It is significant that the New Testament makes use of no term or combination of terms which can be so translated. Jesus never asked anybody to try to follow him and had scant courtesy for those who suggested a discipleship falling short of complete self-renunciation. Furthermore, by repeated statement and insistent emphasis, he made it clear that the Christian life is not merely an ideal to be attained, but an inner spiritual transformation to be experienced. To use his own symbol (flung at a philosopher who came to him as to an authoritative teacher of an exalted ethic), it is a spiritual rebirth, the making of a mortal into an immortal by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is true that this change is elsewhere called "conversion," a turning around, thus emphasizing the fact that there is a human as well as a divine element in the transaction, but even that means primarily not a changed course of conduct, but a changed attitude toward God. It means love instead of indifference or hate, faith instead of unbelief, submission instead of rebellion.

In this, as in all else, the Acts and the Epistles are in perfect accord with the Gospels. When those who were cut to the heart on the day of

Pentecost cried, "What shall we do?" Peter replied in no uncertain terms: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Whether approaching the matter from the legal or the biological standpoint, Paul's conclusion is always the same: "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God." Drawing a line of demarcation which must be disconcerting to the scoffer at the "twice-born" throng, John says, "He that hath the Son hath the life." The solemn warnings in the Epistle to the Hebrews are to the end that believers shall stop shilly-shallying and make ultimate salvation absolutely sure by unwavering faith in and devotion to him who made atonement for their sins. And even James, in all his talk about works, is but emphasizing the fact that a man's faith must be vital, or his so-called Christianity is but despicable hypocrisy.

Of course there are passages aplenty affirming that man's part in this divine-human transaction is active as well as passive, that the Christian life is a pilgrimage as well as a possession, that there is hard fighting all along the road, and that many who start bravely fail to reach the goal, but all such are complementary and not contradictory to the truth as already stated. Jesus'

solemn advice to "strive to enter in at the strait gate" is but a much-needed warning that only he who is so dead in earnest about salvation and discipleship that everything else becomes as nothing can hope to become a Christian at all. In other words, the second birth differs from the first in that it is voluntary and that the one born must often travail and suffer agony. The statement, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved," is but one of a multitude of assertions that salvation, in the case of the Christian, is not only past but future and that victory is not assured until the spirit sloughs off the flesh. Saint Paul's injunction to "work out your own salvation," is a reminder that individual salvation has vast social implications, and the apostle does not pause until he reminds his readers further that, even in the carrying out of that task, "it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." And those puissant promises to the overcomer, contained in the Apocalypse, are made to him who meets life's tests, not as a poor mortal, trying to climb "the steep and thorny road to heaven," but as "a new creature" in Christ Jesus, strengthened by the resistless might of an unconquerable God.

I know of nobody who has put this truth more succinctly than did Principal Caird, in his Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion. He says:

“Oneness of mind and will with the divine mind and will is not the future hope and aim of religion, but its very beginning and birth in the soul. . . . It is true indeed that the religious life is progressive; but, understood in the light of the foregoing idea, religious progress is not *toward*, but within the sphere of the infinite.”

In all this there is more than a splitting of hairs or the making of a distinction without a difference. The modern change of emphasis from Christianity as a mystical something which Jesus Christ wrought for and works in man to Christianity as a something or series of somethings which man does for God has not proved an un-mixed blessing. To use a trite phrase, a crying need of this crucial time is the certainty that springs from a definite faith and the victory born of a conscious spiritual experience. Popular opinion to the contrary notwithstanding, there is a definite line of cleavage between the Christian and the non-Christian. A man is in the kingdom of God or he is not. He has accepted Jesus Christ as his Master or he still belongs to the devil. At first he may be a “carnal” Christian, as Saint Paul says, but he is nevertheless a Christian. He may fall again and again in his conflict with tyrannical habits, as did Jerry McAuley, but if he repent and believe, he will rise again and become “more than conqueror.”

Moreover, a man becomes a Christian, not by "trying," but by believing, by repentance and faith. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." It is necessary to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, but it is first necessary to repent. When Charles G. Finney went about among those who were seeking God, he asked not, "Will you try?" but "Have you surrendered?" Man's first victory over self and the world is capitulation to God. It is of more than passing significance that, in Bunyan's immortal allegory, the beginning of Christian's journey as "pilgrim of the infinite" was marked by the passage through the strait gate and the rolling away of his burden at the foot of the cross.

Making every concession to native humility and the wisdom of urging the discouraged and fallen to "try again," it is well to remember that "undiscourageable faith" is the only basis of spiritual recovery and assurance of ultimate victory. "I am trying to be a Christian" smells too strongly of a discipleship with mental reservations or a timidity that spells defeat. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Saint John did not write, "we are trying," but "we know," and "now are we the sons of God." Saint Paul did not say, "I am trying." He said, "I am crucified with Christ," and "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

For years John Wesley tried to live the Christian life. By fasting and prayer he endeavored to find peace and he touched two continents in his efforts to do the will of God. Both prayers and labors seemed fruitless, for he found no rest and accomplished but little. But then came that memorable meeting of the Moravians during which he felt his heart strangely warmed and attained the consciousness that he had passed from death into life. Whether or not you accept the statement that that experience constituted his real conversion, certain historical facts cannot be gainsaid. From that day unutterable peace filled his heart and almost unparalleled results marked his ministry. He became a preacher of extraordinary power, the leader of a new Reformation, a Christian statesman of astonishing wisdom and foresight, God's chosen agent in the accomplishment of untold good.

I cannot help thinking of an incident which occurred in the West some years ago. A secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association was talking with a prominent young business man about the things of the Spirit, and at last asked him point blank if he would not become a Christian.

"Well, I'll try," answered the young man.

"I don't want you to try," said the secretary; "I want you to trust."

His companion saw the difference at once. Realizing that there is a vast difference between the endeavor to attain an ideal and the opening of one's heart by faith to the operative influences of the Spirit of God, he "surrendered," committed his all to a faithful Creator, and became a Christian man of marked spiritual power and wide influence.

### CHAPTER III

SHALL THE SEVERITY OF GOD BE  
PREACHED?

The motive of fear plays no such part with us as it did with our fathers. But it has its place, even though a small one. As to allowing it in this present life but disallowing it as to the future, it can only be said that such a distinction is utterly unreasonable. If it is right for a man to remember that to-day's sin will bring its penalty to-morrow, it is right for him to remember that the same principle reaches on into the future life. Of course there is such a thing as craven and contemptible fear. But as a matter of fact few people will shun sin for fear of future punishment who do not also shun it on other and stronger grounds. But all men have both a right and a duty to consider the consequences of sin and of righteousness.—*Robert E. Speer.*

If we imagine that this change (from royal to parental authority) detracts from the seriousness of the relation in which men stand to God, we have not understood the Master. The holiness of God is scarcely mentioned in direct terms in the gospel, but is the underlying fact of all that Jesus said. It is always both implied and apparent that God is all pure, that sin is contrary to his nature and will, and that to him men in their sinfulness are responsible. Above all others, Jesus has made God known as the enemy of sin in the world. Above all others, he has taught how terrible a thing it is to cast in one's lot with sin and identify oneself with its destiny, and all because God is what he is. His reproofs of selfishness, insincerity, heartlessness, falseness before God and wrong toward men, are unparalleled in their severity. His warnings of doom to those who persist in evil have burned themselves into the memory and convictions of Christendom. The holiness of the Father is as terrible to an evil will as it is glorious and lovely to the loyal heart.—*William Newton Clarke.*

## CHAPTER III

### SHALL THE SEVERITY OF GOD BE PREACHED?

IN an article entitled "Methodism Fifty Years Ago and Now," published in the Methodist Review of September-October, 1917, Dr. Tuttle says: "Methodists fifty years ago persistently preached the terrors of the Judgment and an eternal hell. Probably all our preachers still retain their belief in the dreadful consequences of unrepented sin continuing beyond the grave. They would not expunge the doctrine from our standards of faith. But most of them have laid it away in the attic of their intellect, an antiquated memory of the olden times, to be brought out occasionally for exhibition. Very few of our pulpits are blackened with the smoke or scented with the brimstone of a fiery hell."

That is an absolutely correct statement of fact. The pulpits of the Methodist Episcopal Church are silent on those solemn themes, and so are the pulpits of all Methodism and of all the other evangelical churches. The reaction from Calvinism is complete. The leaven of the preaching of Freeman, Channing, Ripley, and Parker has

leavened the whole lump, and "a more liberal spirit" now saturates the orthodox churches. One might widen the horizon and, without fear of contradiction, affirm that the intellectual movement which has wrought this startling change is a part of or closely related to another which has swung the emphasis of both preaching and thinking from the future to the present. Until recently, at least, the mind of Christendom has been so concentrated on "the life that now is" as to obliterate any serious thought about "the life that is to come." Modern preaching shows it. Our hymn books show it. Literature shows it. In the words of a writer in the *Atlantic*, "Mediæval Christianity certainly went mad over heaven and hell; but who now neglects Demeter's green earth for apocalyptic visions?" It would seem, however, as if the time were ripe for a serious study of the situation to which Dr. Tuttle has called attention. The case of the unorthodox or non-orthodox preacher is simple. He does not preach the Judgment Day and an eternal hell simply because he does not believe in them. But the case of the orthodox presents complications. Why is he persistently silent about things in which he still believes? Why has he relegated to the attic of his intellect certain truths (I do not think of them as doctrines) which constitute an integral part of revelation as he knows it?

To say that the people are not interested in them has no bearing. Most of "the people" are not interested in God or the salvation of their own souls. The prophesying of smooth things is not the business of the true prophet. Such a silence can have only two satisfactory explanations: either the preaching of "the terrors of the Judgment and an eternal hell" is not authorized or it is not essential. In other words, it is not included in the divine commission to "preach the gospel" or it is not necessary in the work of bringing men to repentance and righteousness. Of course the difference between those two things is rhetorical rather than real, but it will help in our thinking to approach the matter from those two angles.

The New Testament still constitutes the preacher's most fruitful field and safest monitor in his homiletical work. After all the constructive results of the historico-critical method have been conceded and the proof-text method discarded as obsolete, the Bible, and especially that part of it which contains the record of God's revelation of himself in Jesus Christ, remains to the preacher a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path. Studied prayerfully, it not only helps him more than anything else in the world in his eager search after truth, but it also guides him in the problem of emphasis in the presentation of that truth. I always have believed and always

will believe that any historical fact or aspect of the truth which is given scant consideration there need not be emphasized in creed or sermon, and, by the same token, one that is writ large on those inspired pages may safely be given great emphasis and importance in the proclamation of the "good news." If that is conceded, it becomes apparent that the modern evangelical preacher is guilty of the very crime of which the Christian Scientist and the Unitarian are accused, namely, the distorting of the truth by making use of a carefully expurgated edition of the New Testament. We have here no teaching whose validity is based upon one or two obscure verses of Scripture. The outstanding fact about the body of inspired literature, without which the preacher would become a mere lecturer, is not that it contains so many texts which make use of the word translated hell, or so many which refer to the Judgment Day; it is not even that Jesus proclaimed the doom of the persistently rebellious in terms more terrible than those flung by the relentless Edwards at the heads of cowering sinners, or that in its presentation of the wrath of God the Apocalypse surpasses the picturesque vehemence of Billy Sunday: it is that the whole New Testament is a continuous series of contrasts between the blessedness of righteousness and the misery of sin, the splendor of Eternal Day and the horror of the "outer

darkness." If you are looking for the "trend of Scripture," there it is. The modern preacher may keep silent about the dark side of human life and destiny, but the Master Preacher and that band of intrepid men who turned the world upside down did not. He who breathed "Come unto me" also cried "Woe unto thee." The "wrath of the Lamb" and "the blood of the Lamb" are both Scripture phrases. The parable of the prodigal son and the parable of Dives and Lazarus lie side by side. The promise of "rest" to those who die in the Lord is followed by the terrible statement concerning the finally lost that "they have no rest day nor night." The same epistle which exalts the sacrificial Saviourhood of Jesus bristles with statements of the irreparable harm that awaits the unrepentant and apostate. Out from the same pages where glow the repeated assurance that "God is love" blaze the repeated announcements, in one form or another, that "our God is a consuming fire." The same commission which enjoins the preacher to comfort bids him also warn, and it would be only a waste of time to ask, "Warn of what?" Verily the Word of God is a two-edged sword.

In considering the question as to the effects of preaching the severity of God there are two sources of information: the findings of the psychologists and the pages of church history. Both

are accessible to him who would know. The stock argument against such preaching is that it is an appeal to fear, and that the appeal to fear is psychologically wrong and spiritually injurious. The temptation arises to answer, "Then the New Testament is a blunder from the scientific standpoint"; but it is manifestly better to approach the matter with directness. When the doctors disagree seek out the one who really ought to know and believe what he tells you. And who knows more about psychology than William James? Yet he says:

"Great passions annul the ordinary inhibitions set by conscience, and, conversely, of all the criminal human beings, the false, cowardly, sensual, or cruel persons who actually live, there is perhaps not one whose criminal impulse may not be at some moment overpowered by the presence of some other emotion to which his character is also potentially liable, provided that other emotion be only made intense enough. Fear is usually the most available for this result in this particular class of persons. It stands for conscience, and may here be classed appropriately as a 'higher affection.'

*"If we are soon to die, or if we believe a Day of Judgment to be near at hand, how quickly do we put our moral house in order—we do not see how sin can evermore exert temptation over us.*

“Old-fashioned hell-fire Christianity well knew how to extract from fear its full equivalent in the way of fruits for repentance, and its full conversion value.”

The italics are mine, used to emphasize the fact that, as he proceeds, the eminent psychologist and student of spiritual experience widens the scope of his statement and makes fear, or the aroused consciousness of infinite peril, an integral factor in the regeneration of all classes of men. “We” are moved by the same appeal, aroused by the same complex emotions, and induced to “get right with God” by being brought face to face with the same grim realities as is the transgressor of the laws of organized society. The fact that certain temperaments shrink from the emphasis of the tragic and terrible, and react only to the manifest mercy of the Father, proves nothing to the contrary.

If the doubter still remains doubtful, and refuses to believe on the testimony of one witness, let him read Beecher, that inveterate optimist, on “Through Fear to Love,” and Horace Bushnell on “One Chance Better than Many,” and Harold Begbie’s *Twice Born Men*, that clinic in regeneration which thrilled a discouraged church a decade ago. Or let him turn to a larger and later volume—that of life itself—and find how the blasphemous and indifferent, the men who

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have been unmoved by the "gentle" appeals of "a more liberal spirit," were in multitudes of cases brought to themselves and to Christ by visions of death and the hereafter burned into their souls in the first-line trenches. After all has been said about the soldiers disliking the preaching of heaven and hell, the fact remains that they reacted to religion in a situation where the horrors of hell were made more real to them than ever before. A whole race who had forgotten death were made to feel not only the reality but the cruciality of death.

More than any abstract reasoning or scientific theorizing, that blazing inferno called the world war has proved beyond peradventure that if men are to be saved, they must be brought face to face with and be made to feel the grim and terrible as well as the pleasant and glorious realities.

In the words of the doughty (though now antique) Joseph Cook, "God cannot be an enswathing kiss without also being a consuming fire," and the only appeal to which the generality of men will react must emphasize that fact.

The testimony of history, to be adequately cited, requires thorough treatment. In order to keep the present treatment within the limits of prudence only the general statement can be made, leaving the reader to challenge or confirm. Here it is: every great Christian age and every vital

spiritual revival in Christian history has had at its heart the belief in and emphasis of the Judgment and eternal consequences of continued sin, and, conversely, the periods marked by moral and spiritual decadence have been periods when the pulpit has been silent about, and the people have ceased to believe vitally in, the fact that "because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

"Petrarch said that the court of the popes at Avignon was a place where the hope of heaven and the fear of hell were regarded as old fables, where virtue was esteemed an affair for peasants, and sin was regarded as a sign of manly independence." And if at times the horrors of eternal alienation from God have been dwelt upon even more than the bliss of his presence, what theology lost in sweetness the saints seem to have gained in strength. The preaching of those first Christian centuries, and of Savonarola during the cleansing of Florence, and of the Protestant Reformation, and of Calvin on the continent and Knox in Scotland, and of the Wesleyan revival under the Wesleys and Whitefield, and of the revivals in America under Edwards and Finney and Moody and Billy Sunday—the preaching of those great movements and great leaders has differed in many ways, but every bit of it has been marked to a greater or less degree by one

thing—the insistent, persistent declaration that every man must give an account of himself to Almighty God for the deeds done in the body, and that he who faces the future without faith in and fidelity to Jesus Christ the Saviour is but committing his own soul to the black darkness of spiritual death. No preaching that minimizes or is silent about man's responsibility to God and the eternal consequences of sin has ever brought about a widespread revival of religion or led humanity to the heroic heights of abandonment to the will of God. It is a significant thing that Protestantism had its beginning not merely in the revolt of the monk Martin Luther against the cheapening of salvation by a corrupt church, but in the fleeing of the man Martin Luther from the miseries of hell, both present and prospective, to the cross of Christ for deliverance.

It seems to me that the conclusion is self-evident. The present silence of the Protestant pulpit on the solemn themes of hell and the Judgment is a reaction from hyper-Calvinism. All reactions tend toward extremes and all extremes are pregnant of disaster. From the tyranny of a despot to the tyranny of the mob; from bald literalism to destructive higher criticism; from the excesses of emotionalism to the devitalized calm of intellectualism; from dogmatism to skepticism; from the rack and thumb screw to an easy-going toler-

ance born of indifference; from "mid-Victorian" prudery to the mad nastiness of the early twentieth century—those are a few of the chapters in the history of human progress. And this is like unto the rest. The pendulum has again swung to the end of the arc. If Jonathan Edwards and his frightful sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" represent one extreme, the modern preacher, with the doctrine of "the dreadful consequences of unrepented sin continuing beyond the grave" laid carefully away in the attic of his intellect, may well represent the other. And the last state of the pulpit is at least as bad as the first. If the preacher of the gospel has no moral right to "put the devil on the throne and call him God," neither has he any right to let mankind think of God as a magnified and over-indulgent parent, who winks blandly at all forms of wrong. It would not be fair to assume that this silence in the pulpit is the cause of so much spiritual superficiality in the pews, or even suggest that it bears any causal relation to the moral rottenness which brought our boasted civilization down with such a tragic crash. But it is fair to remind ourselves that these conditions happen to be contemporaneous, and to recollect Carlyle's striking words, "When belief waxes uncertain then practice too becomes unsound." And to the thoughtful man there will come those disturbing

words from Jeremiah, "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace." No sane man would advocate a return to the religion of the November fog, whose chief function, as Brierley put it, is the exhalation of gloom. No one wants preaching that appeals to fear, and that alone. The Christianity which "walks in worried morality" is gone and never ought to come back. But thoughtful men, I believe, can already see the need of that balanced preaching which drives home to the consciousness both the severity and the goodness of God, the wages of sin as well as the gift of God, the horrors of hell and the glories of heaven as well as the call to social service. Then, and only then, will men be rid of their fatuous illusions and realize that now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Then, and then only, can we even hope for the first faint beginnings of a new heaven and a new earth.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF NEUTRALITY

Truths, of all others the most awful and interesting, are too often regarded as so true that they lose all the power of truth and lie bedridden in the dormitory of the soul, side by side with the most despised and exploded errors.—*Coleridge*.

The essence of unbelief is not the denial of the truth, but refusal to treat the truth as true. . . . We are not measured by the truths that we deny, but by the truths that, recognizing, we still are practically ignoring.—*Henry Churchill King*.

The alternatives are strictly limited and exclusive. Men try to play with both, but it is a futile game. Our Lord always insisted that at bottom every man was ruled by one or the other of two contradictory principles. He allowed for black and white, goats and sheep—no neutral tints, no hybrids. However hard it is for us to slice society in two, Jesus says it will be done at the Judgment. There will be two groups, not twenty, and every man is in one or the other of these two groups now.—*Robert E. Speer*.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF NEUTRALITY

It took some good people a long time to discover that mental neutrality toward the titanic struggle called the world war was not a virtue, but a vice. In fact, it was impossible to a man of conscience because the issues involved were not material, but moral. As Agnes Repplier says, in her remarkable essay on "War and the Child," "The absence of decided views, feeling, or expression sounds, when matters of vital importance are at stake, like a contradiction in terms."

How long will it take men to realize that in the unending conflict between God and the devil, good and evil, neutrality is absolutely impossible? In this war, even more than in that, every man is, by necessity, on one side or the other, not only in sympathy and interest, but also in influence and active participation. The Christian aspect of the situation was stated, briefly and bluntly, by Jesus Christ himself, when he said, "He that is not for me is against me." In other words, the postponement of decision concerning one's relation to Christ and his work, by means of which

so many men imagine that they hold the matter in abeyance, is nothing more nor less than decision for the devil. Indecision, that fatal weakness of the double-minded, is not merely a negative weakness; it is a positive contribution to the sum total of evil. Indifference is a personal sin and apathy a spiritual crime against society, and inactivity is, in its final result, activity on the wrong side. There is something ethically significant as well as historically dramatic in that part of the song of Deborah and Barak which runs, "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, the help of the Lord against the mighty." The sin of Meroz consisted in doing nothing when vital issues were at stake.

Approaching the matter from the side of the individual and his own personal faith or non-faith, James says: "If a thinker had no stake in the unknown, no vital needs, to live or languish according to what the unseen world contained, a philosophic neutrality and refusal to believe either one way or the other would be his wisest cue. But, unfortunately, neutrality is not only inwardly difficult, it is also outwardly unrealizable, where our relations to an alternative are practical and vital. This is because, as the psychologists tell us, belief and doubts are living attitudes, and involve conduct on our part." And then, ap-

proaching it from the side of conduct, he says, "There are, you see, inevitable occasions in life when inaction is a kind of action, and when not to be for is to be practically against; and in all such cases strict and consistent neutrality is an unattainable thing." There you have the truth in both realms, in that of belief and in that of life. In both, man is presented with a forced option. He must choose, whether he will or not, and he does choose, whether or not he has a clear realization of that fact.

The two most striking examples in modern history of this compulsion to choice, realized and acted upon, the one disastrously and the other triumphantly, are found in the lives of Aaron Burr and Wendell Phillips. Brought face to face with God by an awakened conscience and made to see that he must decide the matter of his attitude toward God once and forever, the young and brilliant grandson of Jonathan Edwards went into seclusion for a week, fought the question to a finish, and decided that he would not surrender. How, as a result, he became one of the conspicuously infamous figures in the annals of American history and became the willing agent of evil in daring ways, is a matter of common knowledge. When a boy of fourteen, Wendell Phillips heard Lyman Beecher on the theme, "You Belong to God." As he, himself, puts it, "I went home after

that service, threw myself on the floor in my room with locked doors, and prayed: 'O God, I belong to thee; take what is thine own. I ask this, that whenever a thing be wrong it may have no power of temptation over me; and whenever a thing be right it may take no courage to do it.' " That prayer was not answered just as he expected, for it must have taken vast courage to do many of the things he was called upon to do. But it was answered in that he became, as a result of that decision, one of the most useful and influential Christian leaders, not only in abolishing slavery, but also in establishing democracy on a righteous foundation.

In the trying days in which we are living this inevitable alternative is being given the deepest and most tragic significance. Those who thought the end of the war would mean the end of the moral and spiritual conflict, found themselves sleeping in a fool's paradise. The war was only the beginning. As Johnston-Ross states it, it was an episode in a drama of incalculable significance. It was the opening skirmish in a fight to a finish between the forces of good and evil, and that fight cannot be averted by the distinguished gentlemen sitting about the peace table at Paris. Social reconstruction is already being found to be neither automatic nor easy. While the conflict of armies was still raging, a far-seeing

philosopher warned us to look out for one of the violent moral reactions that always follow periods of exalted emotion and heroic action. The chroniclers of contemporaneous history are already busy registering the pathetic evidences of the fulfillment of his prophecy. An American resident in Paris writes to a friend these meaningful sentences: "As time passes, we begin to see more and more that we are looking on at a scene where the play of every passion, be it good, bad, or indifferent, is having its effect on the general result. Every one, from the purest altruism down through the scale to the meanest selfishness, has its part in the *mise en scène*. In spite of the note of the Golden Rule, which is sounded in as well as out of season, it is plainly manifest that there are continental, national, racial, tribal, and personal axes to be ground in the baggage of more than one of the representatives with us, and that the world's grindstone will be freely requisitioned to put an edge on all of them before the sword of justice will be so sharpened that the era of peace on earth, for which everybody, save a respectable number of unregenerate Huns, is longing, will be anything other than a Utopian dream."

Add to that the social revolution which is raging in Russia, Germany, and Austria, and fast spreading to every corner of the world. Add to that the fact, not yet clearly grasped by the many,

that the social radicals the world over not only deride every suggestion that personal virtue has anything to do with social progress, but also laugh at the idea of God and plan the extermination of all religion. And then add to that the equally significant fact that there is a widespread and determined attempt to substitute "the half truths and false psychology of popular altruism" for the austere simplicity and exacting ethic of the Christian religion.

There is nothing to be gained by an elaborate discussion of the relation of these stupendous events to prophecy. Whether the world conflict was or was not Armageddon has no bearing on the case. But it is imperative to relate the whole situation to conduct and character, to faith and practice.

The fact to be noted is that in that stupendous struggle between heaven and hell there will be no such thing as neutrality. The taking of no side will be equivalent to taking the wrong side. Indecision will be enlistment under the black flag of Satanic enterprise and inactivity will be treason. It may be that once more it will cost to align oneself with the host of God, just as it cost in those first fiery centuries of the Christian era. If it does, the result will be beneficial. "We hold all too cheaply beliefs for which we are not called upon to suffer or die." Those were tremendous

and triumphant days when Saint Paul wrote to "my son Timothy," "Yea, and all that will to live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Every age in which the forces of good and evil have been clearly aligned, one against the other, has been an age of trial, but it has also been an age of triumph. In this time of revolution and upheaval the air will be cleared of all fogs and mists, it will be seen that every man must answer the question, "Who is on the Lord's side?" The Spirit of the conquering Christ will make plain to every open mind the fact that "He that is not for me is against me," and new and larger meanings for preacher and hearer will be given that age-old exhortation, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."



CHAPTER V

IF I WERE A YOUNG MINISTER

It is possible for you and me, taking the facts of the spiritual life, to declare them with as true a certainty as any preacher ever did, in what men called the "ages of faith." They are as true to-day as they ever were. Men are as ready to feel their truth. The spiritual nature of man, with all its needs, is just as real a thing, and Christ is just as truly and richly its satisfaction.—*Phillips Brooks*.

There are few things that earnest men need more to make clear to themselves from the beginning of their lifework, than that they will have to fight for time to grow, for time to do solid enduring work, for time to do especially the particular definite piece of work which God has laid on their souls to do.—*Henry Churchill King*.

Nothing makes up for a failure in preaching. The church of all denominations, if they are wise, will give themselves with increased zeal and devotion to the training of the Christian ministry. Nor will any magnificence of ritual, or any musical attraction, or any lectures on secular subjects permanently attract worshipers. It can be done only by Christian preaching.—*Robertson Nicol*.

## CHAPTER V

### IF I WERE A YOUNG MINISTER

Two of the most essential characteristics of a vital ministry are poise and perspective. To be able to see clearly what ought to be done and then, despite clamor and criticism, to hold steadily to the task of doing it—that power will enable even an ordinary man to bring extraordinary things to pass. It marks the difference between a builder and a putterer. And if ever that power was needed, it is needed now. The world is in eruption and nobody knows the end thereof. The only thing upon which men are agreed is that we cannot go back. Old things are passing away; all things must become new. But what will be the effect of the new order of things upon organized Christianity? Crowns and thrones *are* perishing; kingdoms *are* waxing and waning with bewildering rapidity; but are we sure that “the church of Jesus constant will remain”?

In short, what will this after-the-war world mean to the church—transformation or extirpation? That is the question asked by skeptic and believer alike.

The men who, more than any others, will determine the answer are the young men in the Christian ministry, for they will be in the thick of things during the long period of reconstruction. And they will answer it best by approaching the matter from the opposite angle and asking, "What can organized Christianity do for the new social order?" Our business is not to save the church, but to save the world. Jesus Christ is in charge of that enterprise and he has made it perfectly clear that it cannot be accomplished by any merely defensive campaign. Furthermore, he has furnished ample munitions of war and left adequate instructions in military strategy.

Therefore, if I were a young minister, I would concentrate my energies on becoming a preacher, the best preacher that could be made out of the material in hand. The day of the ecclesiastical engineer has gone. That method of kingdom-building, along with many others, has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Stripped of all illusions and brought face to face with the grim realities of life, death, and the beyond, a burdened and perplexed humanity wants the truth, and it is the minister's business to see that the truth is proclaimed. The British soldier's succinct statement, made before going "over the top," "It is all right to entertain me, but I want some one to tell me how to die," was the imperfect

voicing of the race's inarticulate need of prophets, for men who will speak with authority and tact of God and Christ and the soul's salvation. This is no time for the apostle to be serving tables.

My message would be salvation by faith in an atoning Saviour and risen Lord, and no sneers of "the enlightened" or clamor of "the liberals" would cause me to change it one iota. A great deal of the talk about the new age needing a new message is arrant nonsense. Down at bottom the "new age" will be just like all other ages, made up of sinful men and women who need a Saviour, and no substitution of a "Christ ideal" for the historical Jesus can meet that need. Neither Hellenistic naturalism nor a creedless church, made up of those who believe anything or nothing, can save the world. "Christ crucified is unto the Greeks foolishness," now as in the day of Saint Paul, but unto them which are called, in every age, he is "the power of God and the wisdom of God." We may well stop confounding systems of theology with saving faith, but there is an irreducible minimum before which we must take our stand with the statement, "Thus far thou shalt go and no farther." The weakness of the modern church has not been bigotry or intolerant dogmatism, but "fog in theology" and vagueness in the pulpit. And what is needed in the new age

is not a new message, but the old message of salvation by faith in the personal Saviour made vital by a pulpit and church both proclaiming and embodying its truth. As Henry Watterson put it: "Democracy is a side issue. If the world is to be saved after the war, it will be saved by Christianity, *by Jesus Christ and him crucified.*" [The italics are mine.]

I would make the primary purpose of my whole ministry the thorough conversion of individuals. In the case of children you may call the result "decision," for I have no desire to quibble over the question of their relation to the Kingdom. Along with the modern emphasis on the social implications of the gospel has come a ministerial impatience (often unconscious) at the age-old method of world salvation by the regeneration of individuals. Amid "the din of social reforms, political purgations, and all the clamorous, insistent things" of the past quarter of a century, the unobtrusive work of leading men to Christ one by one has seemed slow and ineffectual. It is significant, however, that that very change in emphasis from the mass to the individual, from social salvation by general uplift to social salvation by individual transformation, marks the difference between the Old Dispensation and the New. The longer Jesus's public ministry continued, the more time he gave to the little handful

of men and women who were to "turn the world upside down." I would be a fool to discount the value of reforms and leadership in them as a constituent part of the minister's work, but I would be a bigger fool if I did not insist that his greatest and most far-reaching work is the leading of individuals into the life as it is in Christ. Get men soundly converted, really surrendered to God and transformed by his power, and you can trust them to become honest, just, and helpful in their multifarious relations with their fellow men. But scamp or neglect that work, ignore conversion as a basic element in world salvation, or take men into the church while they are still trying to serve two masters, and you can thunder away at social sins and tinker away at social problems until doomsday without achieving any lasting results. The old preacher in rural England who was rebuked because the total definite fruit of one year's work was the conversion of one boy really did a fair year's work because the conversion was thorough and the boy was Robert Moffat.

In order to be an effective spiritual physician I would compel myself to constant intimacy with God and vital contact with men. Two of the perils of a settled pastorate in these complex times are that a man will be too busy to spend much time with God and too busy with impersonal

matters to really touch the life of the people. And if the mediæval ascetic went too far in one direction, the modern ministerial "good mixer" goes too far in the other. Popular opinion to the contrary notwithstanding, people do not want a mere "good fellow" in the pulpit or out of it. The demand for "reality" in the pulpit is nothing more nor less than the demand for a preacher who knows God so thoroughly through personal communion that he can speak with authority, and knows men so intimately through passionate interest and personal contact that he can speak with discernment. Like Jesus himself, the world wants an apostle who is "in the world but not of it," whose soul dwells with the Eternal in mystical spiritual detachment, but whose heart and mind and body are immersed in the task of doing good. Perfunctory preaching, however cultured, will not do. Perfunctory calling or slum work will not do. They want a ministry that has its roots in intimate oneness with God and flowers in that self-obliterating service which is redolent of honest interest and sacrificial love. Such a ministry was that of Samuel Rutherford and Fletcher of Madeley, of Hugh Price Hughes and Maltbie Babcock and Silvester Horne. Such is that of Bishop Brent and Dan Crawford and Wilfred Grenfell and our own Helms of Boston, a ministry that answers to the full all that yearning of weak

and sorrowing and sinful and discouraged hearts  
for

“The touch of human hands—  
Such care as was in Him  
Who walked in Galilee  
Beside the silver sea.”

In these days of multifarious ministerial calls and a highly complex ecclesiastical machinery that needs constant attention, the attainment of such a ministry is not easy. Among other things, our authoritative Rural Church Programme insists that the pastor must make his church the center of the social life of the community, plan social functions for the young people, organize boys' clubs, “keep something doing in your church all the time,” establish rural study classes for training leaders for conventional church work and for leaders of community service, develop all phases of evangelistic effort, take an active interest in Farmers' Institutes and other rural organizations, attend public sales, introduce a circulating library where none exists, arrange a course of lectures on “Good Housekeeping,” “Farming,” or give stereopticon lectures, organize a Religious Day School during the summer vacation, organize and direct a staff of parish visitors, also a band of personal workers and a few silent workers, and “use all righteous means to lift your community and your entire parish

up to the highest state of moral, industrial, social, and spiritual efficiency." And then, after enumerating a few collective tasks for all the ministers on a district, such as the organization of county farm bureaus, county welfare bureaus, community clubs, county library systems, community health campaigns, home economic campaigns, and the care of the unfortunate classes in county homes, lockups, jails, and insane asylums, the program concludes with the earnest exhortation, "Above all, determine to make your sermons on the Sabbath scriptural, spiritual, and inspirational." That is a stupendous task for any one man. It isn't a program: it is a plan of campaign. And there is a real peril that he who undertakes to carry it out will find himself drained of physical and spiritual vitality alike. A recent article by Dr. Mitchell, of Metropolitan Church, Washington, protesting against the ceaseless demands upon a minister's time and strength, and voicing the cry, "Give the *preacher* a chance," has in it real food for reflection. And there was something tragic in another article, in which a Metropolitan pastor declared that he would find time to commune with God and get from him a real and vital message, or he would leave the work.

I say that, in this age of complex living, a deep and effective ministry such as is really needed is not easy; but I affirm that it is possible. The

young man can attain it if he will. He must feel its worth; formulate a plan and work it; recognize his limitations and honor the laws of spiritual life and growth; learn to discriminate in values and, consequently, to "know the duty of refusing to do good"; hold steady against outward opposition and inward inertia; be content sometimes with slow progress and meager results; guard himself always against the lure of popularity and the substitution of the lesser good; amid disappointment and disaster and misunderstanding, he must "endure as seeing the invisible"; it may be, indeed, that, like his Master, he will have to walk the lonely path of the broken heart; but in the end he will achieve, and, in the largest and truest sense, he will know the meaning of that mysterious promise, "The works that I do shall ye do also, and greater works than these shall ye do because I go to my Father."

I envy the young minister of the gospel to-day more than I do anybody else on earth.



**CHAPTER VI**  
**THE SIN OF SELF-DECEPTION**

Before the overwhelming immensities of the universe, religion alone remains unabashed. Things are as they are. New names do not alter them. Evil is evil. Pain is pain. Death is death. And it is only by accepting them as they are that religion can be true to herself. Let them be what they are and religion will deal with them. Let the sinner be a sinner and she will put her arms around him. Let the sheep be veritably lost and she will recover them. Let the gloom thicken and her radiance shall glow like the noonday. Let life be tragic and she will lift it up among the stars.—*Author unknown.*

Life finds most dangerous enemies in the peril of the lower attainment, and in the lack of honesty and fellowship with the best; and so in refusing to face the outstanding facts of life with an honest reaction upon them, and in turning away from the supreme sources of life. . . . If you would get that real sharing in the life of God in which anything that can be called religion must consist, do not begin to juggle with your reason and conscience. Do not twist the evidence. . . . One cannot build solidly on sham anywhere.—*Henry Churchill King.*

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SIN OF SELF-DECEPTION

WE were all talking about life in the large, with no special reference to things moral or spiritual. Suddenly the Young Lady College Graduate spoke up and said: "When I really want to do a thing, I first convince myself that it is right."

She said it neither boastfully nor apologetically, but as casually as one would make an observation on the weather. Furthermore, she considers herself a consistent Christian, and would resent the suggestion that her ethics are not as sound as those of the Sermon on the Mount. As a matter of fact, however, her casual remark was a tacit confession that, where impulse or desire was involved, she had established the practice of settling all questions of casuistry by deliberate self-deception. And even as she spoke I thought of Ibsen, with his doctrine of illusions, and of that striking Scripture phrase, "the deceitfulness of sin."

Self-deception is the basis of all sin. Sometimes it is conscious and deliberate; sometimes it is unconscious. Not once in ten thousand times

does a man (or a woman) face a thing and say: "That is wrong, absolutely and undeniably wrong. Nevertheless, I am going to do it."

Far from it. He begins by giving it a coat of moral whitewash. In some instances he admits the wrongness of the thing in general, but justifies himself in this particular case by specious argument or concocted excuse. In others he distorts facts and emasculates moral laws until he absolutely hoodwinks himself into believing that he is doing right. Always he ends with a temporarily complacent feeling of freedom from all blameworthiness.

That is the gist of Stephen Crane's remarkable story, *The Red Badge of Courage*. A young man goes to war. He thinks himself the bravest man in the army. In the thick of the battle, however, he discovers himself in the grip of a strange sensation. It is strangely like fear and absolute cowardice, but he reasons that he isn't afraid and couldn't be a coward. Then he convinces himself that the whole army really ought to retreat. In view of the fact that they do nothing of the kind, he decides that he ought to whether the rest do or not. So he runs, precipitately, rapidly, ingloriously. Safely away, he once more accuses himself of cowardice. But that cannot be, so he reasons, argues, debates with himself until he ends with the triumphant and comfort-

able conviction that he is the only really wise and courageous man in the army, while all the rest are stupid fools. If all our biographies were fully written, would that youth's experience seem unique and pathological? Is there not a something in each of us that rises up and cries, "I know that man"?

That is the way the devil tried to debauch the Christ. The father of lies did not openly ask him to do wrong; he began by trying to convince the young man Jesus that the exercise of miracle-performing power for selfish ends was only commendable self-preservation and that spectacular foolhardiness was faith in the Father's care, and he used the Word very deftly to verify his claims. Undoubtedly too that is the way the devil led William II to his state of moral topsy-turviness. The Kaiser told himself that he did not want the world war, and that he was leading his people against barbaric hosts who precipitated the conflict for the sole purpose of annihilating the German nation, until he, in all probability, really believed it.

It is just as true that self-deception is a device by which Satan keeps men living in sin as it is that he uses that means to start them along the "way that seemeth right." The difficulty of finding a convict who will admit that he is to blame for his incarceration is well known to the penolo-

gist or sociologist. He will not admit it to anybody else because he will not admit it to himself. By the same token, the difficulty of getting men living in sin to feel and confess their sinfulness has become one of the outstanding facts in the religious life of our time. In the world of practical affairs there is a deal of vague sentimentalizing about "the spiritual life" which fraternizes very comfortably with questionable habits and practices, and among the intellectuals there is a positive attack upon the spiritual necessity of a conviction of sin. In an article published a year or two ago an ex-preacher who has left the church because it is a failure, to become an apostle of a Beyond Christianity (whatever that may mean), says with a sneer: "We must feel that we are sinners, and go groveling in the dust before God before we can be saved."

You may call it a "trying to climb up some other way." I call it, in both of its aspects, a species of self-deception, for that is at the bottom of it all. The corrupt politician does not admit his corruptions, even to himself. He excuses himself with the trite (and false) affirmation that "the purification of politics is an iridescent dream." The war profiteer pockets his swollen profits with the comforting thought that "everybody else would get them if they could." The German general staff explain away the most re-

volting atrocities with the plea of "military necessity"; the thieving employee justifies his petty thefts with the claim that he is taking only what really belongs to him; and the modern immoral salves his accusing conscience with the modern teaching (which is as old as the devil) that the impulses were given us for indulgence, not restraint.

That is the way too that Satan tries to steal the soul of every follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Phillips Brooks so tartly put it, "Satan takes us by side attacks." The most awful temptation that ever assailed me came clothed in the garb of a Scripture injunction. All moral compromise begins in self-deception, in convincing ourselves that the wrong is right, the forbidden is excusable. All spiritual deterioration has its roots in self-deception, in deliberately shutting our eyes to the compulsion of a divine command or the sinfulness of a questionable practice.

The war did much to bring many to their senses. In the presence of death and the unseen world a multitude of heedless and world-intoxicated men were stripped of all illusions. Under the burden of sorrow and care frivolous women found themselves and God. But what is the way out for the ordinary man? In what lies escape from the peril for him? Where is he to find the

secret of insight into reality, of accuracy in spiritual and moral valuations?

In spiritual honesty. Sincerity and self-deception cannot dwell in the same soul. Life, as a whole, can be right only for the man who faces every situation and circumstance, every inclination and desire with unbiased and illumined judgment, not surreptitiously trying to "convince himself that it is right," but honestly asking, "Is it right? Is it wise?" and then courageously squaring his conduct with his knowledge. Plain honesty would save many a man from moral calamity and lead to the deliverance of many from bondage to sin.

In a strong passage, which views the matter in its social as well as its personal aspects, Rauschenbusch states this necessity most forcefully. He says: "The A B C of social renewal and moral advance is for each of us to face our sins sincerely and get on a basis of frankness with God and ourselves. Therefore Christianity set out with a call for personal repentance. If we only acted up to what we know to be right, this world would be a different place. But we fool ourselves with protective coloring devices in order to keep our own self-respect. Take our language, for instance; it reeks with evasive euphemisms intended to make nasty sins look prettier. We call stealing swiping and cheat-

ing cribbing. As soon as we face the facts, we realize that what we call peccadilloes in ourselves are the black sins that have slain the innocents and have ridden humanity through all its history. That is the beginning of social vision. Personal repentance is a social advance." Those words, addressed to college students, have great value for every man who would be true to himself and to God.

Spiritual safety lies in spiritual wariness. "The heart is deceitful above all things." The final fruit of self-deception is hypocrisy on the one hand and hardness on the other, in having eyes that see not and ears that hear not. That phrase "the deceitfulness of sin" is charged with portentous significance. And that this deceitfulness would imperil believers themselves is shown by the repeated biblical injunction, "Let no man deceive you," and by the warning that those prophets of evil would appear who "would, if possible, deceive the very elect." This never-ceasing danger led Saint Paul to exhort his "children in the Lord" to "walk circumspectly," that is, with their eyes wide open, and caused the unknown who gave us the Epistle to the Hebrews to fill his pages with solemn warnings to the children of God.

More than in all else, however, soul safety and the assurance of spiritual growth are found in

prayer. The solution of every spiritual problem is found in prayer. The right answer to every question of casuistry is secured through prayer. To the man who honestly and persistently asks God's guidance, that guidance will be given. He will not be preserved from blunders, but he will be kept from sin. Bad habits and harmful practices, even those seemingly harmless things which dwell in the twilight zone of ethics, cannot stand the acid test of God's presence. It is in that presence that the hitherto "undiscovered areas of sin" are disclosed to the earnest seeker for light, and it is there that the battles are fought and won which mean the ultimate conquest of those areas. Prayer—persistent and real—is the surest guarantee of complete spiritual self-revelation. The surest way to "know thyself" is to know God by personal communion. The antidote for self-deception and all the illusions that mislead humanity is that constant fellowship with the Father which has its roots in the will to know and do his will under every circumstance and at whatever cost.

## CHAPTER VII

# THE PREACHER AND THE DEMAND FOR A SIMPLE GOSPEL

Definers and defenders of the faith are always needed, but it is bad for a church when its ministers count it their true work to define and defend the faith rather than to preach the gospel. Beware of the tendency to preach about Christianity, and try to preach Christ. To discuss the relations of Christianity and science, Christianity and society, Christianity and politics is good. To set Christ forth to men so that they shall know him, and in gratitude and love become his—that is far better.—*Phillips Brooks*.

Whatever else this war has done to thoughtful men in the army, it has made them see that life is short, that only a few great things in religion matter, and that it is a waste of breath to spend much time on accidentals.—*Harry Emerson Fosdick*.

Sin has no place in the vocabulary of science. Therefore men of culture are not bothering about their sins, still less about their punishment.—*Sir Oliver Lodge*.

The faith which magnifies the unmerited and sin-destroying grace of God is the only satisfying religion, because it is the only adequate interpretation of all the facts.—*G. H. Johnston-Ross*.

The question of how much knowledge or intellectual understanding of divine things is indispensable to an effective faith is one that we cannot answer. Experience shows that a very slight knowledge may often be sufficient intellectual foundation for a strong and efficient faith. Strength of faith is governed more by willingness of heart than by intellectual discernment.—*Author unknown*.

To follow Jesus, even though one does not fully understand him; to do the will even if one has not learned the doctrine; to perceive through much darkness that the Life is the Light of men; these are the marks of the new obedience.—*Peabody*.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PREACHER AND THE DEMAND FOR A SIMPLE GOSPEL

THE movement toward simplicity in the Christian doctrine and message has been gathering momentum for a great many years. The trouble with it has been that some of its most diligent promoters have been actuated by mixed motives and have had in mind an objective of dubious value. The elements of practicality and urgency have now been injected into the situation by a definite and repeated request by the men in the camps and trenches for "a simple gospel." Here we have neither a set of modern feudal barons, crying for an innocuous pulpit that they may continue their plundering without interruption, nor a group of narrow dogmatists whose sole desire is to have the truth run through their own little mold, nor a modern cult of unrestricted progressives set upon the annihilation of all dogma, but a multitude of hungry men who want to be fed. And in one case, at least, as one ecclesiastical leader has pointed out, they furnish as an evidence of good faith an avowal of belief in God, Christ, and man's need of salvation.

The relation of this sincere request to the Church as a whole is a question of sufficient complexity to tax the power of the wisest. Strange to say, the restatement of Christian theology in its simplest terms and the formation of a common creed which will permit Christian unity without spiritual sterility is no easy task. But the bearing of the request on the man in the pulpit is a different matter. To him, both the definite demand and "the great expectancy," formless and inarticulate, which backgrounds it, become an imperative summons to the preaching of essentials, to such an interpretation of God and Christ and life as shall not only convince men's minds, but produce in them conviction, decision, and action. Probably never before in human history has there been such an almost universal weariness of sterile differences and meaningless speculation, a "divine unrest," terminating not so much in the abstract question, "What is truth?" as in the vital, personal question, "What must I do to do the work of God?" The multitude think they don't want dogma, but in the best sense of that much-abused term, that is just what they do want. They want a "Thus saith the Lord." As Dr. William V. Kelley said three years ago, "What this dubitating age needs and what the pulpit must give is *certainties*." And the pressing need and positive demand is for the certainties that relate to the

adjustment of one's life to God. In the righteously impatient words of one aroused man, "Was there ever a time when the race had such a crimson commentary upon Calvary? Why not seize it boldly and use the glorious exegesis without apology, instead of dabbling in vague hypotheses about the moral influence of vicarious suffering?"

That means that a great deal that has passed for preaching in the past twenty-five years will have to go. It must go because it consists of the bootless discussion of irrelevant questions, themes which have no bearing upon life. It was at the close of a sermon of that character delivered at Northfield by one of the erudite scholars of Great Britain that Dwight L. Moody exclaimed, "What's the use of talking to these students about the two Isaiahs when the great majority of them don't know there's one yet?" And a young college editor bore melancholy testimony to the net results of such preaching when he wrote: "We know all about religion except how it feels. We can tell all about the seven big religions of the world and haven't any. We are critical, but we have no simple faith to help our life. We pick out good and bad points in all religions, pigeonhole results, and cease to worry." It is now quite thoroughly understood that we have a new Bible (which everybody has and very few read), and a New Theology (some

of which is as ancient as the earliest heresies in Christian history), and a new psychology and a new gospel of social service, that Archbishop Ussher and his chronology are both *passé*, and that Adam fell up and not down, if, indeed, he ever lived at all; that the child is born into the kingdom and God is immanent and man is divine (though he often acts like the devil), and that the gospel has social implications. The time has now come to tell men just as plainly as possible what they must do to be saved, whether that salvation is viewed as rescue or the recovery of the total man to society and God. "What is the use of sermons that mean nothing and do nothing?" Or what is the use of pecking away at the leaves and branches when the ax needs to be laid at the root of the tree; of flogging men for not applying their religion to their economic life, when a great many of them have none to apply? One sermon that leads men to say, as did the thoroughly aroused Scot, "I am determined to go out and do the devil some definite damage," is worth a hundred that establish the fact of the four strands in Genesis or dilate on the glories of the ideal Kingdom, without arousing a single conscience. Better the story of a little ewe lamb, followed by such a cry of "Thou art the man" as to bring a David to his knees in shame-faced contrition for his dastardly sin, than an elaborate

treatise on doctrine or life which leaves the transgressor undisturbed in his smug complacency and the common man saying, "It may be true, but what difference does it make?"

This concentration upon the essentials and the honest effort to interpret them in terms of experience does not mean that the constructive conclusions of reverent scholarship will be set aside, or that the social aspects of the gospel will be ignored, or that preaching will deteriorate to the monotonous reiteration of a few set phrases and worn-out themes. It means that all the riches of knowledge and powers of man will be focused upon the supreme business of building men into the kingdom of God. The value of a sermon depends, not upon its subject, but upon its object. Its gospel quality depends not so much upon its circumference as upon its center. As a matter of fact, there is more genuine simplicity in the incisive analysis of Robertson, the Attic beauty of Phillips Brooks or the exquisite phrases of Sylvester Horne than in the extemporaneous ranting of one whose thought is muddy, while his vocabulary is limited. And there is more real gospel in John Wesley's "Reformation of Manners" than in many a man's labored interpretation of the atonement. It makes little difference where a man starts or how far a-field he roams, provided he bring his hearers at last face to face

with Jesus Christ and leave them on their knees before their revealed Lord and Redeemer. Anything that does that is preaching. And, though many do not realize it, that is an achievement difficult enough to tax the inspired genius of the biggest man God ever made. "To urge people to follow Christ may lead to the merest flabbiest pulpit rhetoric; the effective gospel is to preach a Christ who leaves men unable to do anything else." And the man who undertakes to do that, to attain that result which alone constitutes the justification of preaching, will find ample scope for the widest knowledge and the most consummate skill.

Of course the men in the pulpit will not find themselves in agreement as to the content of this simple gospel. If the primary purpose of bringing men into the kingdom of God be dominant, it is not necessary that they should. The Holy Spirit condescends to reach the hearts of men by means of widely differing theologies and opinions. John Wesley and George Whitefield fought each other over the vexing questions of foreordination and free grace, but together they fought the devil with the offer to sinful men of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, with the net result of two continents transformed. But the point to be noted is that their circles of passionately proclaimed truth intersected at two points, the

Saviourhood of Christ and the sinfulness of man. And those two truths must inhere in the message of to-day, or it were better that we had never been born. As the learned judge said to the young Whipple, afterward Bishop Whipple, "Don't preach to the judge; preach to the sinful man." Any gospel that fails to probe humanity's moral sore clear to the core is not a simple and effectual, but an emasculated and ineffectual gospel. The chief obstacle in the path of an overwhelming spiritual awakening is the universal evasion of personal responsibility for sin. O, there is plenty of the "sense of sin," but it is the other fellow's sin. Modern methods of wrongdoing by proxy, of absentee deviltry of all kinds, have almost destroyed that consciousness of blameworthiness without which, in spite of the scoff of the intellectual and the dribble of the sentimentalist, moral reconstruction and spiritual regeneration are improbable, if not impossible.

But if the church accuse the world of spiritual callousness the world accuses the church of moral timidity or worse, and to an unbiased observer it looks like another case of the pot and the kettle. Granted everything that can be said in praise of modern Protestantism, the fact remains that some men have not sought the church's proffered salvation because they did not consider it worth the having. Judged by its interpreta-

tion in many pulpits, orthodox as well as heterodox, it cost nothing except languid acquiescence to a few devitalized formulæ, and judged by the membership roll it resulted all too often in complacent hypocrisy or imperfectly sterilized worldliness. To the supersensitive there seemed to be a rather too free translation of the half truth contained in Lowell's lines:

"'Tis only heaven that is given away,  
'Tis only God may be had for the asking."

In plain terms the unpardonable sin of which the church stands accused by the world to-day is ethical insincerity. In spite of Beecher's tart statement that "You can't pray cream and live skimmed milk," there are many trying to achieve that moral impossible. And the gravity of the situation is intensified by the fact that in many instances the heads of the churches know it and do nothing about it. Grant that church membership does not connote perfection (though it does connote sincerity), and that the administration of church discipline is a difficult and delicate business at the best, the fact remains that a revival of religion whose initial characteristic consisted of a courageous and thorough ecclesiastical house-cleaning would stand a fair chance of having as its crowning glory a countless multitude of genuine conversions. It is immensely significant

that John Wesley conducted no campaigns for church membership and with a fine disregard for both the parable of the wheat and the tares and annual statistics, made no ado about dropping hundreds of delinquents at a time. In short, there is great need of our being reminded, in our eagerness to meet the demands of the times, that "nothing can be taken away by a broader theology from the relentlessness of the moral process of salvation. One may change one's conception of the Supreme Being from Moloch to our Father in heaven, from the destroyer to the Saviour of mankind, but until one shall agonize in the conflict with passion and through heroic suffering put on the form of righteousness, there can be no improvement." If it is true that the simple gospel so desired to-day in order to be an effectual gospel must have its roots in the blood-stained soil of Calvary, it is also true that it must have as its first and finest fruit a morally reconstructed and spiritually regenerated personality.



**CHAPTER VIII**

**NOVEMBER AND JUNE IN RELIGION**

The Crucifix stood there, an emblem of sad and noble truths—that pleasure is not an end but an accident, and that pain is the choice of the magnanimous.—*Robert Louis Stevenson.*

The idea shared by many that life is a vale of tears is just as false as the idea, shared by the great majority, the idea to which youth and health and riches incline you, that life is a place of entertainment. Life is a place of service, and in the service one has to suffer at times a good deal that is hard to bear, but more often to experience a great deal of joy. But that joy can be real only if people look upon their life as a service, and have a definite object in life outside themselves and their personal happiness.—*Tolstoi to his son, Ilya.*

## CHAPTER VIII

### NOVEMBER AND JUNE IN RELIGION

J. BRIERLEY likened the Puritan type of piety to a November fog and affirmed, in striking phrase, that its chief function was the exhalation of gloom. It was an apt characterization, so apt that one could fairly feel the chill of the sunless spiritual autumn.

If the inimitable essayist had described early twentieth-century spirituality in meteorological metaphor, I wonder if he would not have called it the religion of June sunshine and declared that its chief function was the radiation of cheerfulness. Instead of the thunders of Calvinism there was the genial warmth of a liberal theology, with special emphasis on the kindliness of God and the divinity of man. Instead of the dismal doctrine that this life is a probation and that self-realization is attained by the suppression of all natural instincts, there was the enthusiastic belief that this world was given man to enjoy and that normal expression leads to self-realization. Instead of hair-raising hymns and somber volumes like *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* and Foxe's

Book of Martyrs, there were the sunshine and glory songs, and what some carping critic has called "the O Let Us Be Joyful" books. Out on the periphery were the new-born but lusty sects with the slogans, "Follow us and you will be happy; follow us and you will be healthy; follow us and you will be prosperous." Of course there were exceptions and variations, but the prevailing type of spirituality (we no longer use the word "piety") in the early years of the twentieth century was strikingly like the exhilarating atmosphere of an early summer day.

There is much to be said in favor of the change. If proof texts were not out of style, I would say that the Scriptures themselves are responsible for the statement that a merry heart doeth good like a medicine. "Some days must be dark and dreary," but an unrelieved stretch of gloomy weather is both dismal and depressing. Sunshine is as necessary to the health of the spirit as it is to the health of the body. The trouble with the Puritan was that he was so intent upon looking at the graveyard that he couldn't see the sky. And yet, in spite of assurances that we were making marvelous progress, there seemed to be something lacking. The easy-going benevolence and irrepressible good spirits of a generation that loved amusements and resented restrictions of any kind did not seem to produce any better men or

bring in the kingdom of God any faster than did the vertebrate narrowness of Cromwell and his Roundheads or the stubborn loyalty to conscience which drove the Mayflower and her psalm-singing passengers through the perils of an uncharted sea to the forbidding fastnesses of an untamed wilderness. In spite of the determination to be happy there was unrest, a growing conviction that while God was in his heaven, all was not right with the world. And then came the war.

The relation of the war to religion is even yet a matter of controversy and conjecture. Of some things, however, we are sure. The world-conflict was at once a revealer of the need of change and the cause of change. It not only exposed the rottenness of our civilization, but also knocked a great deal of our theology and philosophy into a cocked hat. You talk about the war abolishing theology. It was God Almighty's demand for a theology thorough enough to account for the lurking devilishness as well as the spiritual possibilities in human nature. Man may be divine, but he certainly is capable of moral lapses which suggest that there was more than a germ of truth in the cast-off doctrine of total depravity. The serious business of reconstructing a shattered world is disclosing to thoughtful men the puerility of the pursuit of happiness. Happiness is not an end.

In fact, the New Testament says nothing at all about its being a part of the Christian life. To all those who came after him the Master offered peace in the midst of life's turmoil, blessedness, often with persecution, and that heaven-born joy which earth's vicissitudes could not disturb or destroy. Orison Swett Marden's book on "How to Get What You Want" has perished in the rarified atmosphere of a new world spirit—another proof of "the expulsive power of a new affection." We are not here to get what we want, but to do the will of God and welcome the consequences. The New Testament promise to the faithful is not prosperity, but LIFE. Of course godliness is profitable, but he who tries to become godly for profit will end in the devil's almshouse, and he who draws the biggest dividends will find they are not paid in the coin of the realm. This life is both privilege and a probation. This world was given us to enjoy, but woe to him who loves the world and so crowds out the love of God. Self-realization is attained by expression, but it is not attained by self-indulgence. Our appetites were given us to master, not to gratify. Renunciation, self-denial, suffering for the sake of others—that is the thorny and glorious path by which we attain the heights. In other words, we possess by sharing; we get all that is worth while in life only as we forget everything in the pas-

sionate love of God and man; we live only as we die. Of all these truths, which are as old as God, this crucial time is reminding men. Not all will learn the lesson, for there are always those who have eyes and see not, ears have they and hear not. But the elect will see and understand.

But the war did more than reconstruct men's thinking. It saved men's souls. It "stabbed men awake." Poor Elijah wept because he alone of the faithful was left. And all the time there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. So the holy remnant in the early years of the twentieth century bewailed the lack of the noble and spiritual in the younger generation, and the heroic and godly were not dead at all: they were only half suffocated. We did the best we could to spoil our young people, to make them irresponsible and lawless and luxury-lovers and weaklings, but all the time God was at work inside, fostering that "homesickness for heaven" that makes the far country a miserable makeshift and earth itself but a wayside inn. All that was needed was something big enough and compelling enough to grip, and it came. Not all reacted favorably to the stimulus, but multitudes did. Donald Hankey was not the only one to find peace and the highest self "over there." On the mutilated bosom of France, Belgium, Italy, and the East, many a youth found not only a deeper

philosophy of life but life itself, and found it in the old, old way of faith in a Personal Redeemer and vicarious suffering for humanity. Some were granted the priceless privilege of martyrdom. Some may lose the vision with the return of peace and its enticements. But others—God's own—were not only disillusioned but illumined, not simply chastened but sanctified, equipped to lead humanity into the truth that maketh free, the knowledge and possession of a Christianity that is buoyant without being superficial and serious without being somber, the Christianity of conscious oneness with Christ.

## CHAPTER IX

# THE NEED OF A NEW CONCEPTION OF GOD

A cheap theology ends in a cheap life.—*Henry Drummond.*

It is a matter of history that the broadening of creeds has usually been accompanied by a great decay of zeal on the part of believers.—*George A. Gordon.*

We feel ourselves to be separated from God, and consequently crippled in our faith by things which troubled the ancients very little. Therefore the only God who can reveal himself to us is one who shows himself to us in our moral struggle as the Power to which our souls are really subject. This is what is vouchsafed to us in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

If there be any rationality in the universe at all, then the life into which we go must be the logical and inevitable outcome of the life lived here. In this sense, at least, some judgment must always be passed upon the life, and accountability must always stand.—*Henry Churchill King.*

Where consideration has so often been freshened by new providences and new revelations of God, and all best capacities of truth and feeling have been mocked and hardened by the abuses of a life, what magic is there to be in the strange environment and discoveries of another state of being, that they are going to make men susceptible without susceptibilities left, and turn them back to the right which they have lost the sense of, and from which they have all their life long turned uncaringly away?—*Horace Bushnell.*

## CHAPTER IX

### THE NEED OF A NEW CONCEPTION OF GOD

IT is now quite generally agreed that Germany's madness can be traced straight back to Germany's apostasy. Putting the facts in terms of national life, it is said that German *Kultur*, with its brood of insane and piratical acts, is the legitimate offspring of German rationalism. Or, personalizing the whole matter, it is stated that ex-Emperor William's philosophy and conduct are alike fiendish because his god, with whom he seemed for so long to be on astonishingly familiar terms, is not the Christian God at all, but some barbaric deity. Here is another case of a man's becoming like the being whom he worships.

It has not yet been said that the same relation of cause and effect holds good in the case of the modern world's conception of God and its moral and spiritual state; and yet the available facts are just as convincing. Look at the situation. The three things most frequently postulated concerning God are, first, that he is love; second, that he is our Father; third, that he is immanent in the universe of which he is the Creator. And

of the three, the most frequently affirmed and the universally accepted is that he is Love. Even when men think of him as Father, it is as the loving Father. And even when they talk of his immanence, they dwell upon the fact that he is immanent in love. The stupendous fact that God is Love has captured the imagination of Christendom.

Now, rightly interpreted and viewed in its relation to the whole body of revealed truth, that one of the eternal verities is of superlative value to mankind. "When John wrote his copulative sentence in his first epistle, he inaugurated a new era in Christian understanding." But right there lies the crux of the existing situation. This truth is not rightly interpreted, and it is viewed entirely apart from its relation to the whole body of truth. In that statement I am not referring to the fact that much of our modern theology is not orthodox, but to the obvious fact that the popular or prevailing idea of God is as far from the truth as is the ex-emperor's. "We hold in our mind conceptions of God that are not much better than the Kaiser's." In his discussion of "The Unity of God's Character," William Newton Clarke says: "We ascribe to God certain qualities of character, set forth in familiar terms, but when we come to define them we are under the influence of our own limitations, and however

large and worthy the terms that we use, our conceptions are sure to become narrowed toward the dimensions of humanity. Naturally, if not inevitably, we bring the perfection of God down toward our own imperfections."

That is exactly what has happened in the present instance. The common man has reduced the statement "God is Love" to the perilous proportions of the half-truth. The equally momentous fact that He is holy, that "our God is a consuming fire," has been almost absolutely obliterated from his consciousness. Whether right or wrong from the standpoint of a strictly orthodox theology, men look upon God as their Father. They have forgotten that he is likewise their Creator; their Sovereign, to whom they owe allegiance; and their Judge, before whom they must stand at last and give an account of "the deeds done in the flesh."

Furthermore, the modern idea of God errs not only in its isolation of the central truth of the gospel, but in its distortion of that truth. The perfection of God has been brought down to our imperfections. Or, in the blatant words of the skeptic Ingersoll, "Man has created God in his own image." The love of God has been evacuated of all ethical significance and all consequent spiritual compulsion. It has been translated into terms of mawkish sentimentalism. In

these days of a minimized parental authority, the average man believes in a Fatherhood of God devoid of all moral and spiritual exactions. He has not thought the matter out calmly and thoroughly, for he does not do things that way. But "there is a logic of the hopes and fears that insidiously smuggles its conclusions into the realm of the intellect." By this devious and perilous route he has come to two more or less clearly defined convictions.

The first is that God is not very exacting with his weak and erring children. This kindly disposed and thoroughly indulgent Parent not only does not hold his imperfect children blameworthy for their shortcomings, but he willingly accepts generosity in place of righteousness, humanitarian activities as a substitute for "unspottedness from the world," and spasms of virtuous emotion as something "just as good" as the surrender of the will.

The other conviction or vague feeling which men have about God to-day is that he is eternally accessible. It is not so much a belief that they will have in the next world a chance to measure up to the rigid requirements of a moral and morally exacting God as it is that this easy-going quality in the divine character is permanent; thus making the salvation of all men, however far short they may have fallen of the

Christian requirement, an assured fact. The average man, in his loose thinking, has not postulated a second probation. He has done away with the idea of probation entirely. In a strikingly calm, dispassionate article on "Religion in War Times," published in *The Atlantic Monthly* of September, 1918, Dr. William Ernest Hocking, professor of philosophy at Harvard University, says of the soldier who enlisted in the Allied cause: "Always there is something that sets this particular act of dedication [enlistment] apart in the mind of the decider. . . . It tends to put him on fundamental good terms with the invisible universe as with visible society. And it is likely to serve as an unuttered argument to the effect that God, if there be a God, will not be too hard on him, whatever happens."

It is unnecessary at this time to enlarge on the fact that a vast number of good people have translated that vague feeling into a certainty, and affirmed without hesitation that "going over the top" means salvation. It is quite essential, however, to call attention to the yet more significant fact that vast numbers who never saw the front-line trenches are obsessed with the idea that "God will not be too hard on them, whatever happens." In the three years just past, especially, I have talked with all sorts and conditions of men, with men to many of whom it might truth-

fully be said, "Many things thou lackest"; and I found them all complacent and calm as regards their future. As one dissolute man said, "If my Father won't take care of me, who will?" Or, as another put it, in speaking of a mutual friend who had passed through a period of genuine conviction of sin, "That's all bosh. The Almighty doesn't require that of anybody."

The prevailing opinion as to the destiny of those who have died, whatever their moral and spiritual state at the time of their exit, is plainly stated by Elizabeth Ashe in her story *Appraisal*. The story begins with the announcement of Alan Reid's suicide, and the subsequent discovery by his young widow that he had been a defaulter of trust funds, and, at the time of his death, was living in illicit relations with his secretary. Indignant and ashamed, she went to call on his mother, but found her enumerating his good qualities as a child. Together they read his old letters, enlarged upon his cast-off virtues, and decided that, in spite of the fact that he went out of this world a thief, an adulterer, and a suicide, he would ultimately be all right. The author sums up her philosophy in a final statement which she puts into the mouth of the young widow: "Past and present are only a part of a life. There's the future, the long future to complete him. He will go on—with us, dear."

In Dr. Hocking's analysis of the consciousness of the soldier, and Elizabeth Ashe's doctrine of the destiny of a scoundrel, we have the modern idea of God at perigee and apogee. Not only the man who enlisted, but also the sentimentalists of all shades, the intellectualists, and as many of the social idealists as believe in a future at all, have taken the yearning of "the larger hope," and the hypothesis of "the upward thrust by a Universal Spirit," and "the half truths and false psychology of popular altruism," and the erroneous conclusions of Christian Science, and evolved either an indulgent Parent who is too tender-hearted to punish anybody or an automatic salvation in which all men are included, willy-nilly.

It is to be expected that such views of God and destiny would rob religion of its solemnity, life of its moral compulsion, and conscience of its authority. Fifty years ago, in his sermon entitled "One Chance Better than Many," Horace Bushnell pointed out the psychological stupidity and moral peril of such a flabby and unethical faith, if it can be called a faith. To assume for a moment that man can spend his whole life here consciously choosing the lower and inferior, letting the animal in him dominate the spiritual, substituting self-will for the will of God, and then, in the next world, by some magical power of divine love, either be made selfish and blessed at

the same time or be transformed into an angel of light, is to do violence to all the teachings of psychology and to corrupt human life at its center. "It is a very self-evident fact that if we had two or more trials offered us, we should be utterly slack and neglectful in the first and should bring it to its end almost inevitably in a condition utterly unhelpful." It is just as true of ideas as it is of men, that "by their fruits ye shall know them." To put it subjectively, and to use a sorely overworked and much abused Scripture saying, "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Experience proved to John Wesley that a liberal theology does not always connote a low moral character in the individual, for he found that there were heterodox saints as well as orthodox sinners. But historical experience has proved beyond peradventure that a flabby and unethical conception of God, comprehending a "posthumous salvation"—what Bushnell ironically calls "a basement gospel"—reacts disastrously upon the race as a whole. It is the merest commonplace that the element of reverence has gone from our modern religion. With the sense of God's holiness has gone the sense of man's sinfulness, and with the ethical conception of the Divine character has gone much of the reality from our religion. There is no use in contrasting the Present and the Past, in putting the worst

of to-day beside the best of yesterday. But neither is anything to be gained by glossing over the facts. The triad of sins which curses the modern world is made up of hypocrisy, compromise, and presumption. There are many in the church who are substituting philanthropic activity for spiritual vitality, formal religion for a saving faith, forgetting God's insistent demand, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes." Vain oblations have changed in outer aspect, but they are still offered by those who dream of a God who can be placated by gifts. The excuse that "a man must live" is offered in extenuation for corrupt business practices and participation in questionable enterprises. Instead of a social order based upon the clear consciousness that "you can't compromise on the big things of life," we have what Howells gently designates as "that easy-going, not evilly-intentioned potential immorality, which regards common property as common prey." The universal assumption is that the exalted ethic of revealed truth must give way before the pressure of individual physical necessities and a hostile social order. The astounding thing about the world in general is not that moral laxity exists, but that in a multitude of cases it is justified by the specious plea of "moral freedom." And while the world war

has modified some of these evils, it has left others untouched.

There are not wanting those who say that all this is due to the lack of a "social consciousness." Unless I have read both my Bible and my history upside down, it is due, primarily at least, to the lack of a "God consciousness," of a deep and overwhelming realization that God's love is ethical, that God himself is inexorably exacting, and "life is ethical from the outset." There is a growing disdain for consequences, because there are no consequences serious enough to be concerned about. The occasional plea of the old-fashioned preacher to "flee from the wrath to come" is received with supercilious scorn or hilarious contempt. The simple and comfortable fact is that there is nothing to flee from. The average man has answered Joseph Cook's question, "Is there nothing in God to fear?" with just two words—"Absolutely nothing." And so he either contents himself with spiritual minimums, the calm confidence that "God, if there be a God, will not be too hard on him, whatever happens," or the satisfying hypothesis that the mysterious and unknown forces of another life will effect in his indifferent soul the needed transformation which the exigencies of this life could not.

Obviously, then, any serious attempt to make the new social order Christian must be accom-

panied by a rediscovery of the Christian God. And that means that we must turn from the philosophers and sentimentalists and intellectuals and social idealists, and endeavor to comprehend "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," revealed to us not only in what Jesus said but also in what he was and did. It is not within the purpose of this essay to attempt anything like an outline of the Christian doctrine of God, but it is to insist that any doctrine or conception worthy of the name Christian must emphasize the ethical consistency and unity of the divine character. One thing that the race needs "in order to full goodness" is a clear knowledge of the elements that go to make up Perfect Personality, "with a perception of what they mean and what they require." Two generations ago men needed to be told that "God is Love," that he is on their side. To-day they need to know that God's love is moral through and through, that he is not on their side unless they heed his voice and do his will. The modern world sadly needs a reemphasis of God's holiness and of the retributive element which inheres in that holiness. A legal enactment is not necessary in order that evildoers be punished. The severity of the heavenly Father is as essential to his Fatherhood as is his goodness. Or, putting the truth in the terms of cause and effect, so popular in this scientific age, the conse-

quences of sin are written into the moral universe and the nature of man, a moral being. Furthermore, "a good God demands that his children be good," and that they be good here and now, or suffer the consequences. To do away with the crucial character of man's decision as to the fulfillment of his obligations to God, the probationary character of life, and "the strict limitation of the probationary period to this life," is to deny the plain and explicit teachings of Jesus Christ. The man who insists upon the claim that "the redemptive purpose of God must continue forever" ought to be as honest as was Theodore Parker when he said, "I believe that Jesus Christ taught the everlasting punishment of the wicked, but I refuse to accept it on his authority." He ought to go farther and admit that his God is not the Christian God. Soft and easy conceptions of God have no place in Holy Writ. In a terrific arraignment of the ex-Kaiser and a most melancholy prophecy of his probable destiny, Lyman Abbott says: "I believe that he will pass, as we all must pass, from the deceptive lights and theatric shows of this world to the revealing lights and stern judgments of the world to come. There he will stand for judgment before Him who denounced as a generation of vipers, fit only to be cast out as the offal of the universe to be destroyed by the fires of Gehenna, those who had

devoured widows' houses and made long prayers. . . . I have no power to conceive what divine scorn and wrath he will confront who has spread over half a continent poverty, famine, disease, slavery, and death."

Those are puissant words, and right well do they sound in an age of soft phrases and honeyed drippings. But is William Hohenzollern to face Almighty God in solitary shame and terror? Upon him alone are the scorn and wrath of an outraged Deity to be poured out? What of the whited sepulchers, by no means all "made in Germany," who are beautiful without but within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness? And the profiteers who, even though they buy Liberty Bonds and sing "The Star Spangled Banner" with tearful eyes, justify Samuel Johnson's blistering affirmation that "patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel"? And the impure, who would insult a holy God by attempting to offer him physical courage in place of a clean heart? And the apostles of compromise, between whose private life and business practices is a "great gulf fixed"? And the horde of selfish and indifferent who, in the presence of the unending conflict between the forces of righteousness and forces of evil, turn a deaf ear to the cry, "Come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty"? Is it true that God will

not be too hard on them or that the upward thrust of a Universal Goodness will bring them at last to blessedness and perfection, while, cowering under the fury of an indignant Creator, William II suffers the punishment he so richly deserves?

The case may be summed up in a sentence, "When thy judgments are on the earth, then shall its inhabitants learn righteousness." The part of Dr. Abbott's philippic which needs to be burned into the consciousness of the race is "as we all must pass." When men know clearly and feel keenly that "God cannot be an enswathing kiss without also being a consuming fire"; that his love is ethical and inexorably exacting; that his insistent demand is "for a careful ordering of the present life as antecedent to and determinant of future destiny"; then, and then only, shall we have a conception of the divine character consistent with the inspired word of his revelation, justified by psychology and historical experience, and provocative of holy living and holy dying. A Christian social order or a widespread spiritual quickening of the race without a clear, Christian conception of God is a moral impossibility.

CHAPTER X

THE INDIVIDUALISTIC GOSPEL AND  
THE MODERN CHURCH

I

It is an age, as is supposed, of great light, freedom of thought, and discovery of truth in matters of religion, the detection of the weakness and bigotry of our ancestors, and of the folly and absurdity of the nations of those that were accounted eminent divines in former generations; which notions, it is imagined, did destroy the very foundations of virtue and religion and enervate all precepts of morality, and in effect annul all difference between virtue and vice; and yet vice and wickedness did never so prevail like an overflowing deluge. It is an age wherein those mean and stingy principles, as they are called, of our forefathers, which, as is supposed, deformed religion and led to unworthy thoughts of God, are very much discarded and grown out of credit, and supposed more free, noble, and generous thoughts of the nature of religion and of the Christian scheme are entertained; but yet never was an age wherein religion in general was so much despised and trampled on, and Jesus Christ and God Almighty so blasphemed and treated with open, daring contempt.—*Jonathan Edwards, concerning his own age.*

We may dissent from many things urged by them, but they saw things on a grand scale. The Christianity they taught was one that could fill the horizon of an intellectual age and could inspire the awe-stricken devotion of souls like Milton and Zinzendorf and Doddridge and Toplady and the Wesleys. Of course they could, for it was a Christianity with the Rock of Ages as its foundation, with Calvary at its heart, and with an empty tomb as its seal of authority.—*Charles Cuthbert Hall.*

Little has been done in our age toward the profounder vision of the eternal in religion. It is humiliating that here we can do no more than prepare the way of the Lord; that we are fit for criticism, but not for insight, able to consider in scientific order what others have created, but unable to bring forth ourselves; that we are greater than the men of old in research, but immeasurably beneath them in the richness and reality of religion. The role of the prophet in the cleft of the rock, witnessing, so far as mortal man may, the pageant of the Eternal Goodness, is not for us; we are content to investigate the tradition of this high experience, to call attention to the cleft in the rock and the rubbish heap at either end.—*George A. Gordon.*

## CHAPTER X

### THE INDIVIDUALISTIC GOSPEL AND THE MODERN CHURCH

#### I

DR. HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK's criticism of the modern church, published in the January Atlantic, under the title "The Trenches and the Church at Home," is so sane and constructive that it seems like rank heresy to question the accuracy of any part of it. There is one paragraph, however, which calls for more than passing attention, not only because it contains the mature judgment of the writer of the article, but because, as he says, it embodies in substance the greatest grievance which many good men have against organized Christianity. These are the words of Dr. Fosdick:

"The churches for generations have been urging upon us an individualistic and self-centered gospel. We have been continuously supplied, in hymns, in liturgies, in sermons, with Jonathan Edwards's dominant ideal, 'I make seeking my salvation the main business in my life.' Even when this self-regarding motive has not been

centered in a *post-mortem* heaven, it has been centered, quite as selfishly, on this present life."

Now, as I understand it, that is not a criticism of Jonathan Edwards's theology, which is "a faded tradition," or the emotional excesses which attended the great awakening and the Wesleyan revival. It is an indictment of the ideal itself, of the gospel as preached by Edwards and Wesley and Whitefield and Finney and most of the other religious leaders of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And, as I see it, the indictment really includes two counts, the claim that the gospel as so interpreted was, *per se*, "individualistic and self-centered," and the claim that the modern church has failed to retain its primacy in human affairs because of its stupid loyalty to that ideal.

I wonder if that is really so. Is it really true that the whole genius of Christianity, as construed by those leaders of yesterday, was based upon and productive of "an excessive regard to one's personal interest," and that the modern church has become ethically sterile and socially ineffective because the attention of those who compose it has been centered either "on a *post-mortem* heaven or, quite as selfishly, on this present life"?

If Jonathan Edwards and his contemporary, John Wesley, are taken as the most illustrious

exponents of that individualistic gospel, and if isolated statements by them are taken as indicative of its true character, it must be admitted that the case does indeed look bad. Edwards did say that he made seeking his salvation the main business of his life, and with all the vehemence of his fiery eloquence, he urged everybody else to do the same. And, though separated from him by celestial diameters in theology, Wesley was absolutely at one with him in his advocacy of that religious ideal.

When he sailed for Georgia, ostensibly to minister to the Indians, he wrote to a friend and made the rather startling confession, "My chief motive is the saving of my own soul." Of the fifty-nine sermons in his first volume of published discourses, only one bears the remotest relation to what might be called a "social gospel"—his sermon before the Society for the Reformation of Manners—and in that he says, frankly: "This is the original design of the Church of Christ. It is a body of men compacted together in order, *first to save each his own soul.*"

In his sermon at the foundation of City Road Chapel he again gives expression to the same theory, referring to the Methodists as "a company of people, associating together to help each other work out their own salvation." And, as is well known, he wrote into the constitution of

the church which he so reluctantly established, the statement that the only condition required of anybody for membership is 'an earnest desire to be saved from his sins and to flee from the wrath to come.

It is the merest commonplace, however, that a snap judgment, based upon isolated statements, is unjust to any man or any movement. By that method the Christ himself would be condemned. What did Edwards and Wesley really mean when they insisted that a man's primary business in life is to make sure of the salvation of his own soul? And how did that ideal work? In other words, what were its individual and social results? Only as we try to answer those questions honestly and fairly can we make any just estimate of the spiritual value of that ideal.

Peabody says that "the inadequacy of prudentialism is not its belief that to save one's soul is of supreme concern, but its belief that one's soul can be saved alone." If that is true, and it is, then the teachings of Edwards and the teachings of Wesley after his attainment of an inner spiritual experience are forever cleared of the imputation of prudentialism. Can anyone read those quaint and soul-searching resolutions, made by that serious-minded New England youth and fail to feel the impact of his grim determination not only to become absolutely at one with God,

but also "to do whatever I think to be my duty and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general, whatever difficulties I meet with, how many and how great soever"? Can any thoughtful man read that sermon on "The Manner of Seeking Salvation," with its solemn statement that "It is a business of great labor and care; there are many commands to be obeyed, many duties to be done, duties to God, duties to our neighbor, duties to ourselves," without feeling that in the mind of that devout mystic seeking one's salvation was a very comprehensive and far-reaching enterprise? When, as a result of the preaching of that gospel, several hundreds were received into the church at Northampton, the covenant required of them was that "They solemnly promise and vow before the Lord to have a strict regard to rules of honesty, justice, and uprightness; not to overreach or defraud him (their neighbor) in any matter, or either willfully or through want of care to injure him in any of his honest possessions or rights; further, they will not allow their private interest or honor or the desire for victory against a contrary party to lead them into any course of which their consciences would reproach them as hurtful to religion or the interests of Christ's kingdom; and particularly, in public affairs, not to allow the interests of party or the desire of

worldly ambition to lead them counter to the interests of true religion." Can the harshest critic of the religion of two centuries ago take that programme at its face value without feeling that its application to existing conditions, even in this age of ever-widening conceptions of the gospel's social implications, would shake the whole social order to its very foundations? And can anyone read Edwards's denunciation of the element of religious selfishness in the popular Calvinism of his day and his insistence that "that affection toward God which arises from self-love is a mere product of the natural man, having in it nothing of the supernatural or divine," without coming to see that the very tendencies in the modern church which are so insistently attributed to the influence of his ideal were attributed by him to the misinterpretation and prostitution of that ideal? As a matter of fact, when it comes to the incisive statement that the only real test of any man's religion is to be found in its fruits, how much difference is there between the widely acclaimed statement of William James that "the whole defense of religious faith hinges upon action," and Edwards's statement that "there is not one grace of the Spirit of God, of the existence of which, in any professor of religion, Christian practice is not the most decisive evidence"?

Until he was thirty-five years old Wesley's

interpretation of the Christian ideal was, without doubt, narrow and selfish. All that has been said by Dr. Fosdick and everybody else about a "selfish and self-centered gospel," could be said, with absolute accuracy, about his. While a fellow at Lincoln College, Oxford, he wrote in his Journal, "I resolved to have only such acquaintances as would help me on my way to heaven." When his father, the aged rector at Epworth, alarmed at the prospect of the work there falling into the hands of a dissolute parson, wrote and asked him to take up the task, he answered with twenty-six highly elaborated reasons why he could not, "twenty-five of which were essentially selfish." So indignant was the doughty old apostle that he wrote to his ascetic son: "It is not dear self, but the glory of God and the different degrees of promoting it which should be our main consideration and direction in the choice of any course of life."

At thirty-five, however, Wesley had that inner spiritual experience which changed his whole life. In his own well-known words: "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I

felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

From that time *Wesley's ideal was not changed, but his conception of the mode of attaining it was, because he himself was changed.* It is not quite true that "he was saved because he had found his work." Rather is it true that he found his work and did it with a power and fruitage hitherto undreamed because he was saved. Whether or not we agree with Wesley himself in looking upon that inner experience as his actual conversion, the fact remains that he grounded all that he was and did in it and it alone. And that assurance that he was saved changed not his message but its meaning and content. To the very last he insisted that every man's main business in life is to make sure of the salvation of his own soul. To the last he looked upon the church as "a body of men compacted together in order, first to save each his own soul." But his conception of that salvation broadened and deepened. It no longer meant getting safely to heaven by monastic asceticism while the world went to the devil, but complete cooperation with God in his task of saving the world. Emerging from the influence of exaggerated mysticism and Moravian quietism, he saw and taught that the highest

interests of the individual are subserved not by separation from, but by complete identification with, the highest interests of the race, and that supreme concern for and attention to the salvation of one's own soul results in and finally comprehends supreme concern for and striving after the salvation of mankind. To use his own words: "This old religion is no other than love, the love of God and of all mankind; the loving God with all our heart and soul and strength, as having first loved us—as the foundation of all the good we have received and of all we ever hope to enjoy, and the loving every soul which God hath made, every man on earth as our own soul." If any man in this age of "an awakened social consciousness" has given utterance to a bigger, broader, more comprehensive interpretation of the gospel of Jesus Christ I do not happen to have heard of it. Furthermore, it is only fair to add that Wesley not only preached such a practical gospel, but administered his societies on that basis. "The virtues that make good citizens and good neighbors were the indispensable conditions of membership in those societies." Omitting all reference to the highly satirized clause concerning amusements, the fact remains that a rigid application to the modern church of Wesley's ethical test as to the reality of a man's religion would result in an ecclesiastical exodus beside which the

departure of the children of Israel from Egypt would shrivel to the proportions of a mere incident.

In fact, Edwards and Wesley both preached what seems like an individualistic and self-centered gospel because of the unalterable conviction that that was the only gospel for a world whose root problem was sin. The tragedy in the case of Edwards was not that his dominating ideal was selfish, but that it was freighted with a hideous and impossible theology. "The incongruities, the absurdities, even, to which Edwards's teaching gave rise were not altogether inherent in his theory (of virtue), but sprang from its association with the Calvinistic doctrine of election or predestination." His philosophy may be summed up in his own correlated postulates, that "he who has true love toward God will be more disposed than others to be moved with benevolence toward individuals," and that "the love for individual or particular beings, in order to be genuine, must spring out of the love toward God as its motive and sanction." With that theory Wesley was absolutely in agreement. No man knew the middle and lower-class Britishers of the eighteenth century better than he did, and no man had a livelier interest in all that concerned their highest good. The injustice of the landed gentry, the corruption which permeated contemporary politics, the high

cost of living, and all the other "social questions" that troubled the world in his day received his serious attention. But a great deal that is made primary to-day was made secondary by him because he was convinced that the only way to bring those reforms to pass was to get individual men soundly converted, and that the only way to get hardened sinners and smug hypocrites converted was not by an altruistic appeal, but by a solemn summons to get right with God. "The supreme concern of Jesus throughout his ministry was not the reorganization of human society, but the disclosure to the human soul of its relation to God." In that Wesley was content to walk in the footsteps of the Christ. And, like the Christ again, his mode of getting that done was not by exhorting men to go out and do things for their fellow men, but by entreating them to repent that the Holy Spirit might save them from their sins.

At the close of his remarkable and remarkably discriminating Life of Wesley, Professor Caleb T. Winchester says: "Wesley had little confidence in any other means to uplift and direct mankind, apart from this force of personal religion. . . . He was no believer in salvation by education and culture, by economic and social reform. . . . He did assert most positively—as the Master did—that a genuine religious life must be known by its fruit in outward conduct, and would admit no

man to be a good Christian who was not also a good citizen. But he was convinced that the truly righteous life, the life that realizes the best possibilities of human nature, must spring from that devout love to God which directs and controls all a man's desires, and he knew that such a life is inspired and nurtured by influences supernatural and divine. Philanthropist, social reformer, he was first of all and always the preacher of personal religion."

In that keen analysis of Wesley's philosophy and message it seems to me that Professor Winchester has made perfectly clear, once and forever, what those religious leaders of yesterday really meant by their so-called selfish and self-centered ideal.

CHAPTER XI

THE INDIVIDUALISTIC GOSPEL AND  
THE MODERN CHURCH

II

The one proof of a divine sanction upon his work he [Wesley] found in that absolute and often sudden change of temper which turned thousands of those to whom he preached from vice to virtue, from a life of sin to a life of righteousness. This, call it conversion, the new birth, or what you will, was an indisputable fact.—*Caleb T. Winchester.*

To say that the new evangelism is to be ethical and by that to seem to criticize the old, is to prove a misunderstanding of the old, and also a misunderstanding of the deepest necessity of the times in which we live and serve. When a man tells me the next revival will be ethical, does he mean to say that the last was not? If the great movements under Wesley, Whitefield, Finney, Moody were not ethical, what were they? They were movements that took hold of vast masses of men, and moved them out of back streets into front ones, and if that was not ethical, surely nothing can be so. Beginning with the regeneration of the man, they changed his environment, and made him a citizen of whom any city might have been proud. That is the true ethical note.—*G. Campbell Morgan.*

Your predecessors, the Puritan pastors of New England, were strong in their sense of the new social order which was to come as the earthly realization of the kingdom of God. They dreamed of a genuine theocracy, a civil order in which the reign of the Divine Spirit would be complete. However imperfect, and even clumsy, modern criticism may deem some of their attempts to establish their social ideals, the real content of those ideals, the brave conception of an associated life which should embody and express the will and purpose of God for men, was possessed of high and lasting value. And it will add a hundredfold to your own usefulness as pastors, if you too may, in the language of our day, hold aloft ideals which shall be equally commanding, and labor for their realization with the same splendid zeal.—*Dean Charles R. Brown.*

Here [in Mark 1:14-20] we have the beginning of organized Christianity. This is the germinal cell of that vast social movement of which foreign missions, the establishment of the American republic, and the modern labor movement are products. It began with repentance, faith, and self-sacrificing action, and it will always have to advance by the same means.—*Walter Rauschenbusch.*

## CHAPTER XI

### THE INDIVIDUALISTIC GOSPEL AND THE MODERN CHURCH

#### II

THE final and crucial question about anything in the realm of religious idealism is, How does it work? In other words, as Jesus stated so explicitly, and as Jonathan Edwards contended in his *Treatise on Religious Affections*, it is just as true of a man's religion as it is of anything else that by its fruits ye shall know it. Concerning an individual's ideal or profession, therefore, we need to inquire, What was its effect upon him? What kind of a man did it make him? And concerning a definite religious movement based upon a clearly defined interpretation of religion, we ought to inquire, what was its effect upon society? As Coe puts it, "The ultimate test of religious values is nothing psychological, nothing definable in terms of how it happens, but something ethical, definable only in terms of what is attained."

The one prerequisite of a conclusion even on that basis, however, is that the judgment be just.

William James says that "we must not confound the essentials of saintliness, which are the general passions (felicity, purity, charity, patience, self-serenity), with its accidentals, which are the special determinations of these passions at any historical moment." It is not fair to test the eighteenth-century application of an ideal by twentieth-century social standards. Neither is it fair to judge the social value of a religious movement by its aberrations and excesses.

Of the fruit of the "selfish and self-centered gospel" in the lives of its protagonists, Edwards and Wesley, very little need be said. In majestic moral grandeur and almost flawless spiritual excellence, both men tower not only above their contemporaries, but even above the vast majority of the choicest spirits of all time. There is little wonder that, years ago, a British author wrote in the *Westminster Review*, "From the days of Plato there has been no life of more simple and imposing grandeur than that of Jonathan Edwards." And there is just as little wonder that Professor Winchester concludes his *Life of Wesley* with the exquisite and thoroughly merited tribute, "It were idle to ask whether he were the greatest man of his century. That century was rich in names the world calls great. . . . But run over the whole brilliant list, and where among them all is the man whose motives were so pure,

whose life was so unselfish, whose character was so spotless?"

There is the paradox, the ethical mystery of it all. Professor Winchester, in his *Life of Wesley*, and A. V. G. Allen, in his *Life of Edwards*, make it clear beyond peradventure that the outstanding characteristic of these exponents of "an individualistic and self-centered gospel" was a superb and noble unselfishness. In the whole spirit and conduct of their lives, they were hemispheres away from the self-regarding philosophy of Herbert Spencer. Edwards was a mystic, but the self-absorbed raptures of unrestrained mysticism had no more part in him than did the crass stupidities of prudentialism. He was an ascetic, from his young manhood until the day he died, but the perverted Christianity of monastic asceticism, which systematized self-inflicted sufferings for the sake of "merit," never found lodgment in his great soul. That which the young manhood of the world did a short time ago for a limited period of time, he did for a life time, to a greater degree and for as exalted a motive. Not only because of what is said, but because of him who says it, I cannot forbear quoting Allen once more. He says of Edwards: "He too is an ascetic at heart; but his asceticism, however it may have erred, is of a higher type than the ancient or mediæval forms. It is of the heroic cast which

orders life with reference to the highest end. If he abstains from amusements, from excess of food, from many hours spent in sleep, it is not because he believes such abstinence scores so much to his merit, but because he has a work to do, and, like his Master, is sorely straitened until it be accomplished."

Even during his life time, Wesley's utter subordination of all personal comfort and gain to the supreme end of cooperating with God in getting men saved not only broke down all opposition but compelled the unwilling admiration of his critics. Samuel Johnson complained because Wesley was so busy that he made it uncomfortable for "one who likes to fold his legs and have his talk out, as I do," and also said frankly to Boswell, that "whatever might be thought of some Methodist preachers, he could scarcely doubt the sincerity of that man who traveled nine hundred miles in a month, and preached twelve times a week; for no adequate reward, merely temporal, could be given for such indefatigable labor." It was not so much what Wesley did, however, as what he did without, that gave to his unselfishness its superlative quality. A man who really loved leisure, and more than once in his *Journal* acknowledged its almost resistless appeal, he gave up, for fifty-four years, everything that might be called by that name, counting that time

lost which was not spent either in benevolent activity or communion with God. A man of innate refinement, he renounced the cloistered intimacies of intellectual centers that he might live with the middle and lower classes of sin-sodden Britain. And a man of choice tastes, and, for many years, of income sufficient to gratify them, he yet chose to live on one hundred and fifty dollars a year, using all the rest to the glory of God and for the good of mankind. As he, himself, quaintly put it, when asked by the excise officer for a report on his "plate": "Sirs, I have two silver spoons here in London, and two in Bristol. This is all I have at present, and I shall not buy any more while so many around me want bread."

Of course all that would mean nothing to Randolph Bourne, for he derides personal virtue as a means of world betterment. But it does mean much to those who believe, with Peabody, that "the secret of national welfare is in personal morality," or, with Saint James, that "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." And, whether or not it can be said of the complacent and prosperous church of to-day, surely it cannot be said, after reading the lives of these men—and of multitudes more who made their souls' salvation the first business of their

lives—"against the background of the millions of self-forgetful men who fought in France, how dark this record looks." Rather must we say of each of these, as Edwards said of David Brainerd, "His religion was not selfish and mercenary; . . . his joy was joy in God and not in himself." In other words, the incontrovertible testimony of history is to the effect that the man who is normally and healthily concerned about the salvation of his own soul, to the exclusion of everything else, will ultimately be more concerned for the complete salvation of the race and do more for the race than the man who looks upon all concern about one's soul as a selfish business.

The total social value of the lives, teachings, and work of these two apostles of the individualistic gospel cannot, of course, be computed. It is true in the estimate of spiritual movements as it is in the estimate of human character, that "man looketh upon the outward appearance." Only the Infinite Wisdom knows the hidden streams of influence and their final effect upon human conditions. The judgment of the unbiased and thoroughly informed, however, can be trusted, here as elsewhere, to give us an approximately accurate estimate of values. Again, let it be said that, because of its intolerable theology, Edwards's work was doomed to certain limita-

tions. His deterministic philosophy and the fact that his own ministerial work was severely local led to perversions and excesses in the great awakening. Even at that, however, there is much to be said. After making allowances for all that and for the fundamental defect of "severing the spiritual from the world of human interests and realities," the fact remains that in its total effect his life and his gospel have constituted "an effective ferment of goodness, a slow transmuter of the earthly into the more heavenly order." His protest against the Half-Way Covenant, made at such cost to himself, purified the church for a century after he had ceased from his labors. At a time when the whole tendency in morals and religion was toward laxity, he was "destined by Providence to be its chosen agent in arresting the gradual drift of religious life to yet lower levels." When his work was done the separation between church and state in New England was absolutely assured. Mrs. Edwards was far from being the only one who came to realize "in an unusual and very lively manner, how great a part of Christianity lies in the performance of our social and relative duties to one another." It is of more than passing significance that Dr. Hopkins, Edwards's friend and pupil, had more than anybody else to do with the abolition of slavery in New England. And Allen goes so far

as to say: "Without such a preliminary movement as the Great Awakening, it is doubtful if the sentiment of humanity which has been such a powerful factor in modern civilization could have made its successful record. The hardness and cruelty of the last century [the eighteenth], the want of sympathy with human suffering, the injustice which had long reigned undisturbed, were gradually overcome when men ceased to remain strangers to their inmost selves." Thus does the biographer of Edwards and Brooks bear witness to the social value, not only of the religious revival in which Edwards was the greatest human factor, but also of the subjective element in that revival.

John Wesley was a practical mystic and a Christian statesman of the first order. The clearness of his vision and the breadth of his sympathies were manifested in the many-sidedness of his work. Long before institutional churches were ever heard of or social service had become a fad he effected a religious organization whose ramifications extended into almost every department of human life. He founded schools for poor children, night schools for unlettered working folks, and nourished the unpopular cause of popular education; the orphanage at Newcastle was known throughout the empire; and in connection with the London Society were a dis-

pensary, a loan office, a book store which furnished to the poor good literature at low cost, and an employment bureau.

With his keen interest in all that concerned human welfare, his unwearied insistence upon the ethical test of every man's religion, and his extraordinary genius as an executive, combined with his sane emphasis upon religion as an inner experience, there is little wonder that Wesley's work affected the whole life of the race. Indeed, the judgment of historians as to the social value of that work seems to be unanimous. A study of the lives of whole multitudes who were changed by his individualistic gospel leads inevitably to James's conclusion that "the highest flights of charity, devotion, trust, patience, bravery, to which the wings of human nature have spread themselves, have been flown for religious ideals." And if the radical social idealist, the man who thinks of "social results" in terms of economic and political reform, objects that this is not enough, the answer is that this was not all. Birrell says that "no other man did such a life's work for England." Lecky specifies one phase of that work when he affirms that "Wesley was one of the chief forces that saved England from a revolution such as France knew." F. M. Davenport calls attention to the correlated result in his declaration that Wesley's greatest service was

not rendered to the church at all, but to the cause of democracy. And Green, in his *Short History of the English People*, frankly claims that the noblest result of the Wesleyan movement was "the steady attempt, which has never ceased from that day to this, to remedy the guilt, the ignorance, the physical suffering, the social degradation of the profligate and the poor." But it seems to me that Dr. J. H. Jowett, with the mental and spiritual acumen which characterizes all his utterances, puts the whole thing into startlingly concrete form in his memorable words: "The revival of personal religion under the Wesleys gave rise to the four great philanthropic movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the anti-slavery movement, led by Wilberforce; the prison-reform movement, led by John Howard; the Sunday school movement, initiated by Robert Raikes; and the foreign missionary movement, led by William Carey." If any modern apostle has a greater record to his credit, I would like to know it.

The significance of all this is vastly enhanced, when it is remembered that it was the fruitage of a lifework whose dominant purpose was not social betterment but the salvation of individual souls, and whose insistent appeal was the selfish appeal now so hotly under fire. To the last he called himself "a brand plucked from the burn-

ing." To the last he devoted the vast resources of his genius, not to establishing "social justice," but to "spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land." He would have uttered a hearty "amen" to Phillips Brooks's sage prophecy that "this earth will be a hell when all men go about clamoring for their rights." (And, by the way, isn't the wisdom of that statement finding tragic justification in the trend of events since the close of the war?) To all the modern attempts to establish religion by altruistic appeal, and in the face of every claim that the old form of religion is "such a selfish thing," I believe he would have made calm answer, in words closely akin to those of Lyman Abbott, that "*love to God and service of man are not the foundations of religion. They are the fruit of religion.* . . . Christianity has, through the ages, been enabling men to love God and serve their fellow men, not by presenting them principles to contemplate, but by imparting to them power through faith in a Person." And to bring about that miracle of grace, which made helpful wives out of common scolds, noble men out of sodden brutes, and good citizens out of lawbreakers of long standing, he had no qualms about telling them that they never could amount to anything in this world or the next until they did, before everything else, flee from the wrath to come and make absolutely sure of the salvation

of their souls. He preached that gospel because it secured the results. And he kept on preaching it, and making everything else subsidiary to it, because he saw it changing multitudes of individuals and slowly leavening the whole social order. Not long before his death, when the dissolution of body and soul had already begun, and the Unseen World must have seemed even nearer than ever before, he spoke for the last time, and his message was, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found: call ye upon him while he is near."

In his book *The Social Principles of Jesus*, Walter Rauschenbusch makes the same criticism upon the Christianity of yesterday as do so many others. He says: "The contribution made by Christianity to the working efficiency and the constructive social abilities of humanity in the past has been mainly indirect. The main aim set before Christians was to save their souls from eternal woe, to have communion with God now and hereafter, and to live God-fearing lives. It was individualistic religion, concentrated on the life to come. Its social effectiveness was largely a by-product. What, now, would have been the result if Christianity had placed an equally strong emphasis on the kingdom of God, the ideal social order?"

The late apostle of a thoroughly socialized Christianity raises a fair question, one which

no sincere man would seek to avoid. Dr. Dale made the same suggestion of a lack of complete social outlook in the Wesleyan revival. Let us grant it. Wesley was a political conservative, and distinctively a man of his time in his attitude toward economic questions. But no man can demonstrate beyond peradventure that our modern principles of political and industrial democracy could have been injected into his work without irretrievable disaster accompanying it. No thorough student of the Scriptures and Christian history can deny that the social effectiveness of Christianity always has been a by-product, from the first century until the present. And while every sincere man must believe profoundly in the modern emphasis of the social aspects of the gospel, time alone will show whether or not the new method of Kingdom building is really more effective than the old. If Wesley erred, he erred on the right side. If the vast movement under his superb leadership lacked anything, it lacked that which it could best spare. If it is true, as Rauschenbusch says, that "every advance toward the kingdom of God, that is, toward the true social order, involves a raising of the ethical standards accepted by society," it still holds good that the raising up of hundreds of thousands of Christ-transformed, God-fearing men, as was done in the Wesleyan Revival, con-

tributes more than anything else toward that desired end.

When the last argument has been presented and the last atom of data used, I cannot help thinking of the incident related by Dr. Gunsaulus, in his address on Emma Willard. He says that, on a raw autumn day, a young English nobleman was riding about the country. Feeling chilled after a while, he rode into a village and spent some time looking for a public house. Angered at his failure to find one, he finally accosted an old man with the snarling question,

“‘Why is it that a man can’t get a drink of liquor in this miserable place when he wants one?’”

“And the old man respectfully removed his hat and said:

“‘Because, sir, a man named John Wesley passed this way about a hundred years ago.’”

Superb, I say. And when the last critic of that “individualistic and self-centered gospel,” that gospel which does not hesitate to proclaim the salvation of one’s own soul as the supreme thing in life, has had his say, I am content to hark back to those honest words of Brierley’s, incorporated in his last volume of essays: “If you put ‘hell and damnation’ for all that system of things which punishes guilt and the abandonment of the good, are the words too strong? It *is* hell and damnation, and those early evangelicals knew it and

said it. *And the medicine gripped and worked.* . . . We say that this movement, purely religious, purely spiritual, was, within the range of its influence, the best solution of the social question that has yet been offered. . . . If there is any other way of creating a true social life, we should be glad to hear of it. It has not appeared so far."



## **CHAPTER XII**

# **THE BASIC WEAKNESS OF THE MODERN CHURCH**

A church whose members recite formularies that have no relation to their active life is rotting at the core.—*J. Brierley.*

One of the most terrible signs of how the spirit of sordidness has filled the world is the lamentable extent to which it has pervaded the church. The church is constantly found trusting in second causes as if she knew of no first cause. She elaborates her machineries as if the power lay in them. She goes, cap in hand, to rich men's doors, and flatters them and dares not tell them of their sins because she wants their money. She lets her officers conduct her affairs with all the arts of a transaction on the street or an intrigue in politics, or only shows her difference of standards and freedom from responsibility by some advantage taken which not even the conscience of the exchange or of the caucus would allow. . . . You must cast all that out of the church or you will make its pulpit perfectly powerless to speak of God to our wealth-ridden and pleasure-loving time. You must show first that his church believes in him and is satisfied in him, or you will cry in vain to men to come to him.—*Phillips Brooks.*

As a religion, Christianity stands out from other faiths by its fearless exposition of conversion: of the possible change of a man's inner forces by union with another force. Its program is nothing less than that of the development of a new humanity; of a spiritual chemistry which changes our primitive elements by a mystical contact; the emergence from the old Adam of "a new creature." In times of religious decadence, the doctrine is apt to be obscured; kept in the background as though it were a vulgarity, something to be ashamed of. A virile church will keep it at the forefront, for it is a true doctrine and a vital. It can be stated in scientific terms. It has all analogy on its side. The church of the future will build itself on the chemistry of souls.—*J. Brierley.*

## CHAPTER XII

### THE BASIC WEAKNESS OF THE MODERN CHURCH

THAT the modern church has ceased to appeal to a multitude of red-blooded, sincere men is one of the incontrovertible facts of modern life, and that this gradual loss of primacy in practical affairs has been caused by a spirit of selfish provincialism is as plain as a pike staff. In the striking words of Silvester Horne, "The modern church is so busy saving itself and paying its way that it has neither the energy nor the vision nor the daring to put the gospel to the proof." And let it be said, in all frankness, that those words were wrung from the lips of that superb man of God after he had been compelled to drive a number of obstreperous standpatters out of Whitefield's in order to secure the privilege of transforming that moribund institution into a church militant and of proclaiming from its pulpit "the message of Christianity . . . to all sorts and conditions of people, in terms of modern thought and in application to the whole life of the community."

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That this failure of the modern church to function in our complex social order is due to the persistent preaching of an individualistic and self-centered gospel is by no means so clear. With all due regard to the stricture of the "English officer" whose criticism has been widely quoted, and granting the possibility of an unfortunate experience on his part, I seriously doubt the existence of many pulpits where a Christianity is preached that "simply threatens sinners with hell and promises comfort to the good." It is a well-known fact that sermons on hell, heaven, and the Judgment have become so rare that a real old-fashioned pronouncement on those solemn themes in any of our great city churches would create a veritable sensation. As the assistant in one of the largest Presbyterian churches in the United States put it not long ago, "The preacher who threatens his hearers with hell in this age stands a fine chance of being told to go there himself." Indeed, by no means the least element in Billy Sunday's popularity with all classes is his vehement visualizing of the devil and consignment of the unrepentant to perdition. Such utterances come with the shock and compelling attractiveness of a decided novelty. In another chapter I quoted Dr. Tuttle's statement that while "Probably all our preachers still retain their belief in the dreadful consequences of un-

repented sin continuing beyond the grave, . . . most of them have laid it away in the attic of their intellect, an antiquated memory of the older times, to be brought out occasionally for exhibition." The significant thing about that statement is that it can be made, with equal accuracy, of the pulpits of all the evangelical communions.

There is not the slightest reason for doubting that the God of whom H. G. Wells was taught in his boyhood was so repellent as to drive that brilliant man to the other extreme. The whole race has come to feel the need of a Supreme Being of a different temperament and larger proportions from the one worshiped by many of the fathers. And yet, foregoing the temptation to discuss the relative merits of H. G. Wells's God and John Wesley's, I am led to really wonder in how many important pulpits at the present time God is actually pictured as "a gigantic policeman, clubbing those who break his traffic regulations and feeding with goodies from his ample pockets those who mind his word." If my reading and observation have not absolutely misled me, the general impression made by modern preaching upon the common man is that God is a sort of a good-natured, indulgent Father, whose unexacting kindness assures everybody of salvation, whether they take the trouble to repent of their sins and put on the form of righteousness

or not. More than ten years ago Dr. Charles H. Parkhurst said: "It was the doctrine of the severest type of Calvinism that God could be just according to celestial principles and still damn a man who, according to terrestrial principles, did not deserve to be damned. And it is also a doctrine, which, although pleasanter and much more popular, will not bear much closer examination, that God can be just according to celestial principles and save a man who, according to terrestrial principles, does not deserve to be saved." During the intervening years, that second doctrine has increased in popularity until it has become almost a racial obsession. In other words, God, in popular thought, is still the gigantic policeman, but the traffic laws have been abrogated and all, worthy and unworthy alike, share in the goodies from his ample pockets.

I have the profoundest admiration for many of the good men who are pointing out the faults of the church to-day. Everybody wants effective action. But is it really true that "we still hear the old appeal that men should come to God because they thereby save themselves for future bliss in a golden paradise"? Isn't a stricture on the modern pulpit for that kind of preaching simply fighting a man of straw? Is it not true that, in practically every important pulpit on the two continents, the "golden paradise" busi-

ness has been taboo for twenty-five years or more? In fact, is it not true that, for a full quarter of a century, in pulpit utterance, religious literature and regular congregational singing, the whole matter of the life beyond death has suffered an almost total eclipse? The Glory Song, whose "shamelessly un-Christian" character I am yet unable to see—although I never sang it six times—is a survival, not a symptom. The new Methodist Hymnal, published about twenty years ago, shows a marked decrease in the number of hymns relating to the future life and a marked increase in such magnificent modern hymns as Dr. North's "Where cross the crowded ways of life." It is a matter of common knowledge that the man in the pulpit, along with everybody else, has shared in that "absorbing interest in this world," which constitutes one of the dominant characteristics of the age and which has practically shut out all serious consideration of the world to come. And the suggestion that the modern church is failing to function because the saints who make up its membership are selfishly absorbed in making sure of the salvation of their own souls while the world takes care of itself, is certainly charged with unconscious humor. The decay of the prayer meeting, the fact that it is far easier to raise a million for missions than it is to get a dozen strong men on their knees, crying, "God be merci-

ful to me a sinner," and the widespread substitution of Goethe's "religion of the deed" for the inner experience emphasized by evangelical Christianity, all point to the well-known fact that if there is one thing the modern layman is not consumingly absorbed in it is the salvation of his soul; and far from being intent on escaping hell and getting to heaven, the truth is that he isn't thinking anything about either.

In one of his two great books, published a few years ago, Dr. Peabody said, "This separatism of religion, this provincialism of the saints, is not peculiar to contemporary Christianity, or, indeed, characteristic of it." Dr. Peabody was right.

It is easy to generalize about the failure of the modern pulpit and church. It is not so easy to bring in a bill of particulars, with evidence sufficient to sustain it. In the last analysis every man's judgment will be based, not only upon the facts, but upon his personal feelings as to the value of those facts. But it seems to me that the real trend of the modern pulpit and church was stated by William James in his lectures on "The Varieties of Religious Experience." He said: "The advance of liberalism, so-called, in Christianity, during the past fifty years may fairly be called a victory of healthy mindedness within the church over the morbidness with which the old hell-fire theology was more harmoniously re-

lated. We have now whole congregations whose preachers, far from magnifying our consciousness of sin, seem devoted rather to making little of it. They ignore, or even deny, eternal punishment and insist on the dignity rather than the depravity of man. They look at the continual preoccupation of the old-fashioned Christian with the salvation of his soul as something sickly and reprehensible rather than admirable, and a sanguine and 'muscular' attitude, which to our forefathers would have seemed purely heathen, has become an ideal element of Christian character."

Those words were spoken in 1902. During those seventeen intervening years that conception of Christianity has grown and spread until it is not too much to say that it now dominates the church. There has been a steady and steadily increasing change of emphasis in the religious world from Augustine's idea of God as an exacting Sovereign to Clement's idea of God as a Father; from the glories and horrors of the future to the problems and duties of the present; from religion as personal oneness with a Divine Person to religion as the performance of a set of duties; from the subjective elements of a Christian experience to its objective manifestations, and especially to activity as the normal expression of faith; from the power of righteousness to flourish in and triumph over the most hostile

environment to the necessity of a favorable environment for the growth of the spirit; from the salvation of the individual or any number of individuals to the salvation of society as a whole; and, in consequence of all this, from personal character to social righteousness or social justice.

To the beneficent results of those changed accents no sincere man can be blind and for its full fruitage of good every true man must be grateful. The new-born social consciousness, expressing itself in the blundering but sincere efforts of a conservative church to adjust its message and methods to the pressing needs of a complex social order, in the passionate, heart-broken service of heroic spirits like the sainted Rauschenbusch, and in the glad sacrifice which the younger generation made for the welfare of the race, will forever mark a long step forward in the upward struggle of humanity. "There never was a time, there never was an age when from the highest to the lowest there was more common human heartedness, more earnest desire to alleviate the lot of those who have to perform the hard services of the world and face its gusty insecurities; and never a time when people were more willing to make personal sacrifices." John Morley was right. And whatever may be said of the provincialism of the church as an institution, the fact remains that if a thorough survey were made, the

vast majority of the individuals who constitute the church, both ministers and laymen, would be found in the van of this vast modern movement.

‘ The wider conception of Christianity which characterizes the present age; the growing conviction that the principles taught by Jesus Christ *must* be applied to economic and political conditions, however revolutionary the result; the insistent demand that the Church of God touch the whole life of the community with the Spirit of God and smite injustice in every form; those and other aspects of the modern religious movement make it most momentous. The protest of the ultra-conservative against the social gospel as such, is utter nonsense.

Let us be grateful for all the good that has come, but, in the interests of the kingdom of God, let us not be blind to its potential perils and actual excesses. James, the psychologist, was made to speak of the trend. Let Shailer Mathews, the progressive, warn of the danger. The quotation is long, but I think it is essential:

“A danger to which Protestantism—particularly progressive Protestantism—in America is exposed is that its churches shall become mere agents of social service. There are many people who, in reaction from extreme orthodoxy, have come to feel that the sole business of the church

is to push social reform. Such a valuing of the church brings no small satisfaction to those of us who have endeavored to set forth the social significance of the spiritual life, but we cannot let social service take the place of God. A Protestant church cannot be an ethical asylum; it must be a home in which souls are born into a newness of life. We want our ministers to be alive to the needs of the hour in politics and in industrial reform, quick to come to the championship of overworked women in factories and the rescue of little children who are giving up their lives that the cost of production may be kept low. We want the message from the pulpit to be heartily in sympathy with our modern thinking. But most of all does American Protestantism need a spiritual passion, a contagious faith in the supremacy of God's spiritual order and an alarm at the misery that waits on sin."

Those words, like the words of William James, were written some years ago. The trend of events in the religious world since that time has greatly increased their significance. American Protestantism has suffered more and more from the lack of spiritual passion and power. And that hunger for the bread that is not given, though still lacking definite expression, is manifest everywhere.

These facts, and many more which might be adduced, justify one in affirming that the essen-

tial weakness of the modern pulpit is not that it has limited itself to "an individualistic and self-centered gospel," or that it has wasted its energies in the preaching of a social gospel, but that, in all too many instances, it has preached no real gospel at all. Randolph Bourne is not an impartial judge, but probably he speaks with as much authority as the English officer whose criticism has been referred to when he says that "most sermons of to-day are little more than pious exhortations to good conduct." The truth of the matter is not that the character of God has been made forbiddingly severe, but that it has been evacuated of every element of ethical exaction. It is not that heaven and hell have been administered to rebellious congregations by a process of forcible spiritual feeding, or that the salvation of the individual soul has been unduly magnified, but that heaven and hell and the salvation of the soul have so dropped out of modern preaching that many of the laity in the evangelical churches no longer believe in hell at all and vast numbers of folks have almost forgotten that they have a soul. It is not that the pulpit has failed to adapt the fundamentals of the faith to modern thought or to interpret the soul's deepest experiences in terms of modern life, but that it has ceased to teach, and in many cases to believe in those fundamental truths and inner spiritual

experiences. Silvester Horne, to whom I have referred already, was no conservative. As minister at Whitefield's and member of Parliament he showed himself a genuine apostle of the modern interpretation of Christianity. He believed in a church "wide as human life and deep as human need," and died at forty-nine, a genuine martyr to that principle. But from the courageous lips of that modern apostle was wrung the startling lament: "*We have some faith left in education, but almost none in what our fathers called conversion.*" Let that stand for the collective confession of the modern ministry, as well it may, for the clear statement of the root of the whole difficulty. And then let it be matched by Lyman Abbott's terse, stern, and uncompromising prognostication of the inevitable result: "Whenever a minister forgets the splendid message of pardon, peace and power, based on faith in Jesus Christ as God manifest in the flesh; whenever for this message he substitutes literary lectures, critical essays, sociological disquisitions, theological controversies, *or even ethical interpretations of the universal conscience*; whenever, in other words, he ceases to be a Christian preacher and becomes a lyceum or seminary lecturer, he divests himself of that which in all ages of the world has been the power of the Christian ministry and will be its power so long as men have sins to be forgiven,

temptations to conquer and sorrows to be assuaged."

The failure of the pulpit to stress the truth finds its natural consequent in the failure of the church to manifest the life. Austin Phelps says that "the biblical idea of the church is simply that of an organized body of regenerate mind; the biblical idea of the world is that of the unsaved multitude of unregenerate mind. Two classes of character, and only two, make up the human race as the Scriptures represent it, namely, saints and sinners, friends of God and enemies of God. A living church always fastens that distinction upon the conscience of the world. Apostolic preaching was full of it. Religious reformations always rejuvenate it." He would be a daring man indeed who claimed that any such line of demarkation exists to-day, even after the term "regenerate" has been given the widest meaning. One of the chief causes of moral and spiritual decadence in Jonathan Edwards's time was the Half-Way Covenant, by which the church sought to retain its failing hold on the people; and it took Edwards's own sublime sacrifice to show the futility of that method. Instead of a specific Half-Way Covenant the church of to-day has no vital covenant at all. Its chief characteristic is the farthest remove from a selfish and self-centered absorption in the things of the

Spirit. Its sorest hurt, and the one from which only the old Balm of Gilead can free it, is not the contemplative separation of its members from the highest interests of the race, but the identification of all too many of them with the lower interests of the race.

The most terrific indictment of the modern church I have ever seen or heard was made, not by the men of the army or Billy Sunday, but by George A. Gordon, the philosopher-preacher of the Old South Church in Boston. In his address, "An Eternal Gospel," he says: "An immense amount of good work is done by all branches of the Christian Church. The strongest defenders of humanity and the mightiest foes of inhumanity are in these churches. Yet it must be said that these precious things are confined to the few. The effective force in the churches is still a Gideon's army, a resolute but meager remnant of the total enrolled membership. . . . What about the mass of church people? . . . Who ever heard them object to the poor dancing-girl on the stage, dancing her soul away to please low tastes? Who can report any revolt on their part over the shame of the city and the traditions of infamy that carries on its black tide thousands of youths to the pit? Do they not know every cheap and questionable book, every slimy play, every audacious device of the person who caters

for pagans, every social function far removed from sanctity, every avenue of exclusiveness and pride, every black art of gossip, every twist and turn of the ropes of inhumanity, and do they not attend church and look for the coming of the kingdom of God?"

Are those harsh words? Then let him who will prove that they are not deserved. Is the ethic suggested by them merely negative? Then let some wise man suggest one more positive. And does the utterance of such things lead some to cry "Treason"? The only adequate answer is that of him in whose defiant ears that same cry sounded long years ago, "If that be treason, then make the most of it." And if anybody can suggest a better remedy than that proposed by Dr. Gordon himself, I would like to hear it—

"What kind of revival will meet this case? Hysteria will not do, nor the devoutness of Lent, nor a turn at psychic healing, whether as patient or patron. What is demanded here is that the ax be laid at the root of the tree; the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; the renunciation of the devil and all his works, and the profound and sincere appeal to the Eternal God."



## **CHAPTER XIII**

### **SALVATION, INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL**

The disciple of Christ knows that it is a self-contradiction to talk of saving oneself in forgetfulness of others.—*Henry Churchill King.*

The Program of Christianity is the conquest of the world by a campaign of testimony through empowered witnesses.—*Dean Boswell.*

There are two extremes among equally earnest men. One class says—they might be called the individualists of the pulpit—"Get the man converted and all's got." If a man is a new creature through Christ Jesus, he will work out for himself a new society. . . . The other class of teachers says: "There are conditions that make a decent life impossible, cesspools in which they who live must sin, or *will* sin and perish. Therefore change conditions and life will be true." These are two half truths. Each alone is a practical fallacy; and it would be hard to say which might be the more dangerous. . . . Our conception of the Gospel must be big enough to receive the truth in both statements, to unite the two half truths into a whole truth.—*Arthur S. Hoyt.*

Those of us who have gone through a clearly marked conversion to Christianity will probably remember that we realized our fellow men with a new warmth and closeness, and under higher points of view. We were then entering into the Christian valuation of human life.—*Walter Rauschenbusch.*

It may seem as if this social aim of religion may depreciate the aim of developing our own personality and of saving our souls. It ought not. Sometimes it does for a time. But we are each so enormously important to ourselves that we are not likely to forget ourselves, and the practical struggle with temptation and sorrow will teach us to seek strength for our personal needs from Christ. In time we shall learn to say with Jesus, "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified."—*Walter Rauschenbusch.*

## CHAPTER XIII

### SALVATION, INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL

IT is affirmed by students of church history that in an excess of religious zeal and a misguided endeavor to carry Calvinistic theology to its logical conclusion, Dr. Samuel Hopkins, friend and pupil of Jonathan Edwards, conceived the fantastic idea that a genuine saint would be willing to be damned for the glory of God. The theory died of its own dead weight, for it travestied the character of God and demonstrated the illogical character of logic when rigidly applied to theology. Tradition says that the *coup de grâce* was administered by a student for the ministry who was undergoing the regulation grueling at the hands of an examining committee. When asked if he were willing to be damned for the glory of God, he replied that he was not, but he was willing that the committee should be. Whether or not tradition is correct, the fact is that the stupid notion that God wanted anybody destroyed for the sake of his glory perished from the mind of man.

The modern idea that a real man must be so

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absorbed in the task of saving the world as to be utterly indifferent to and careless of the salvation of his own soul is equally absurd, illogical, and ethically sterile. It is religion upside down, if, indeed, it can be called religion at all. Brushing aside the obvious fact that a man who is not vitally interested in his own eternal welfare cannot, by any possibility, be genuinely interested in anybody else's, we need to remind ourselves, in this age of intellectual fog, that the very essence of all religion is the eager and conscientious adjustment of one's own personal relations to God, and that this adjustment, effected and perfected by faith, constitutes salvation; and the fact that the working out of that salvation comprehends vast and exacting social obligations does not affect the individualistic element in the least. Again and again Christ emphasizes the spiritual principle that he who loses his life "for my sake and the gospel's shall find it unto life eternal." But nowhere does he even suggest that he who loses his soul while he does things for others shall find it again. And let it be said once more that the doing of things for others will save no man unless it is inspired by or leads to vital oneness with God. If anything that we do, however noble, saves us, then the gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ goes by the boards. If the historico-critical method means anything at all, it means

that the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew can be correctly interpreted only in its relation to the total teaching of Christ. It is true that many a man found God on the shell-shattered fields of France, but it is also true that every one who found him there did so, not by the act of fighting, but by consciously turning to him in a definite venture of faith. William James could not be accused of prudentialism, by the widest reach of that term. He confessed his inability to accept either popular Christianity or scholastic theism. And yet, in his concluding lecture on the Gifford Foundation, he said: "The pivot round which the religious life, as we have traced it, revolves, is the interest of the individual in his private personal destiny. . . . Science, on the other hand, has ended by utterly repudiating the personal point of view. . . . In spite of the appeal which this impersonality of the scientific attitude makes to a certain magnanimity of temper, I believe it to be shallow. . . . The axis of reality runs solely through the egotistic places. . . . By being religious we establish ourselves in possession of ultimate reality at the only points at which reality is given us to guard. *Our personal concern is with our private destiny, after all.*" (The italics are mine.)

Not for one moment am I attempting to make Professor James the defender of a self-centered

religious ideal. What I am trying to do, and what sorely needs to be done, is to show that religion cannot for one moment be divorced from eternal self-interest, in the truest sense of that term. And, while the objective part of religious experience "may be incalculably more extensive than the subjective, yet the latter can never be omitted or suppressed." Winchester says that "a religious man is the man filled with a sense of the presence of God and of the force of spiritual laws *here and now*, convinced of an immediate relation between himself and the Supreme Being." And Bender, in his definition, gives it a still more apparently selfish trend, for he says, "Religion is that activity of the human impulse toward self-preservation by means of which man seeks to carry his essential vital purposes through, against the adverse pressure of the world, by raising himself freely toward the world's ordering and governing powers when the limits of his own strength are reached."

The correlative fact to be noted is that only this inner experience of God, whatever particular form it may take, and however it may have been secured, equips a man for the effective service of his fellow men. Not only will the genuine saint, who has attended seriously to the salvation of his own soul—that is, to such an adjustment of his relations to God as results in a sense of

security and peace—be more anxious to live a just and helpful life, but he will be more able to do so. If his religion is real, ethical as well as emotional, not only will he have a more acute social consciousness, but, what is more to the point, he will do all that he does and be all that he is, with new power and far greater results. Furthermore, the deeper and more real his own inner experience of Christ, the keener will be his insights into the more complex and intricate social relationships. There is vast significance in the fact that the daring social ventures recorded in the book of Acts followed, and did not precede, the day of Pentecost. And there is equal significance in the fact that the missionaries of the cross, the men and women whose many-sided service to the race is only beginning to receive just recognition, are of those who first became concerned about and made sure of the salvation of their own souls. Livingstone was not saved because he went to Africa. He went to Africa because he had been saved, and because he was possessed of the spirit of Him who had saved him. It is very true that Frances Willard became disgusted with her fruitless effort to gain the "assurance" at a Methodist altar, and got up and went about her business. But it is also true that both her going to the altar and her extraordinary lifework were the result of deep concern about her own personal

relation to God, aroused in her during a serious illness. I do not know what Dwight L. Moody preached that memorable day when young Dr. Grenfell was awakened to make religion the business of his life and flung out to become the apostle to Labrador, but I will venture a guess that it was the farthest remove from the modern and popular "Gospel of Social Duty."

There is genuine need of getting it firmly established in our minds that, "in the last analysis, we have nothing to give but ourselves," and that God cannot make large and effective use of us in any form of service unless he, by virtue of our surrender to him, can speak and work through us. "Men see their duty. (They see it and know it as men have never seen and known before.) What they need is adjustment to the sources of power for the performance of duty." Not only do we need Allen's warning against "a religion which almost seemed as if it could dispense with God, so highly did it exalt the independent faculties of human nature, which spoke of the sober performance of moral duty as if it were a substitute for the passionate devotion to a Being"; but we need a clear grasp of the general principle comprehended in Peabody's words, "Many a man can teach Christian doctrine to heathen listeners, but only a life which has been hid with Christ in God can communicate to heathen lives the spiritual

energy which proceeds through Christ from God." He who desires to do anything worth while for his fellow men must first of all, by vital faith, let God do a great deal for and in him. It is very true that he need not wait until he "feels" thus and so before engaging in the important enterprise of helping to make the world better. When the bewildered Wesley said he could not preach faith because he had none, Peter Boehler said, "Preach faith until you have it, and then you will preach faith because you have it." Rightly understood, that was sage counsel. Dear old Professor Hibbard used to tell his students at Wesleyan, "You cannot give a clear expression unless you have a clear impression." Or, as Phillips Brooks put it, in the large, and in an admirable summing up of the whole principle, "The unit of power on earth is not God: it is not man: it is God and man: it is God in man."

It is this personal and subjective element in religion that makes the conversion and upbuilding of individual men the basic work of the Christian Church. The awakening of the modern church to the real magnitude of its God-given enterprise is the outstanding fact in the religious life of this troubled time, and an earnest of the fact that, whatever mistakes are made, they will be the profitable blunders of enterprise and not the fatal blunders of apathetic indifference. At last we

are catching a glimpse of the scope of that great task at which God set himself nineteen centuries ago. Christian leaders and a growing number of the rank and file are thinking in world terms. Thank God for that. The belated brothers who reprimanded William Carey, the cobbler, for his missionary enthusiasm, and informed him that when God wanted to save the heathen, he would do so without Carey's assistance, must be turning over in their graves. And the other disciples of equally circumscribed vision, who are also dead, though not yet buried, are finding their seats in Zion's temple more uncomfortable with every passing week. The slogan of the Haystack Conference at Williams, "We can if we will," has been changed to the yet more dynamic form, "We can *and* we will." The day of foreign missions is dead, and the day of a World Church engaged in a world enterprise has begun to dawn.

The stand of the modern church for a social order based squarely on social righteousness—and not merely "social justice"—is growing unmistakably firmer every day. It is true, lamentably true, that some of the older generation are still unable to grasp the significance of the new ethic, but they are few in number. Not only are the great communions putting themselves on record as in favor of the application of the ethical principles of Jesus to the whole social life; not

only is that momentous message being proclaimed from the pulpit; but the change is being brought about by organized effort. When the church dares to take the next step and, as Wesley did, compel her members, however influential, to square their lives with the principles of the Gospel or get out, then her skirts will be clean. It may be that Gideon's method of developing morale will have to be adopted, but if it is, the results will be beneficial.

The third element in the life of the awakening church, namely, the determination to project the church into the life of the community in an evangelism as many-sided as that employed and authorized by the Master, and to establish new points of contact, is likewise full of hope and promise. The teaching and the healing functions are an integral part of redemptional effort and not supplementary to it. The established relation of the body to the mind, the need of normal forms of self-expression for both individual and community life, and all the other elements which go to make up the principles of real progress, make a positive and comprehensive religious ministry imperative.

After all this has been said, however, the indubitable fact remains that the individual is the intellectual and spiritual unit, and that the regenerated individual constitutes the only pos-

sible basis for a social order either just or Christian. A modern radical says, "Many spiritual leaders imagine that the kingdom of heaven comes simply by regenerating souls, that as man after man turns his face upward, society is duly uplifted." I am not sure that I know just what he means, but I am sure that the world is having a bitter taste of the attempt to uplift society without regenerating souls. "Economically the saintly group of qualities is indispensable to the world's welfare," and the fact to be noted is that the qualities cannot be had without the saint. Woe be unto the church if she thinks of her task as anything less than a world enterprise, but woe be unto her if she, in the ardor of that enterprise, fails in the fundamental task of saving the individual. In a recent number of one of the most widely read magazines, the editor said, "If we can help you as individuals, we have done the best we can do toward helping the country as a whole—for what is the country 'as a whole'? It is nothing but a collection of individuals." That is sense. And the Christian Church is founded on the belief that the best way to help individuals, and, consequently, the world, is to get them saved, genuinely saved, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Canon Freemantle said, "The Christian Church is designed, not to save individuals out of the world, but to save the world itself," and it seems

to me that he was not very happy in the form of his statement. Peabody came much nearer the actual fact when he said, "The problem of other centuries was that of saving people from the world. The problem of the present century is that of making people fit to save the world." Woe be unto the church if she fails to stand for the inalienable rights of all sorts and conditions of men. If she doesn't her doors might just as well be closed. But woe be unto the church if she makes "social justice" her real message and the securing of "rights" the sole end of her enterprise. As Brooks said, many years ago, "The church is not going to convert the world by turning policeman." Granting that terrible wrongs have been done, the bitter fruits of which are now being eaten by the whole race, and granting that he who does not do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before God is not religious, even though he occupy a place of leadership in the church, it must also be granted that the kingdom of God will never be established by a balancing of rights between warring factions, each one of which is intent upon securing its own. It will be secured by the raising up of men who are intent upon going the second mile, at whatever cost to themselves. There are celestial diameters between the socialists of the New Testament, impoverishing themselves for Christ's sake, that the needy might

share in all, and the "unsocialistic socialism," as a prominent German Marxian calls it, that demands not only its pound of flesh but possession of the whole body politic. In the sane and splendid words of that true friend of all men, Frederic Robertson: "Christianity binds up men in a holy brotherhood. It is not sent into this world to establish monarchy or secure the franchise, to establish socialism or to frown it into annihilation; it is sent to establish a charity and a moderation and a sense of duty and a love of right which will modify human life according to any circumstances that may possibly arise."

Woe be unto the church if she fail to minister to the world in every way that means the transformation of human life and character. Her impact upon the world must be made through manifold agencies. But woe be unto the church if she become a mere social center or community center for the promotion of terrestrial interests. The controversy still rages as to just how much the church should do and how much she should get done. In all probability, it will continue to rage for many years, for it is a complex and vexing question. It seems to me, however, that Dr. Timothy Prescott Frost was eminently wise when he said, "A live church is not *first of all* a hive of religious industry so much as an inspirer of religious industry in the midst of all industries,

an upper room where the disciples sit with the Master." It means something that, in all his varied and blessed ministry, Jesus kept the question of the individual and his relation to God in the foreground. Not only is it true that, while reforms raged and social problems seethed, he was content to talk with humble folks about God, but it is also true that all that he did for the bodies and minds of men was made the means of rousing them to repentance and faith. In the puissant words of Nolloth, "He came bathed in eternity, to speak to perishing men about the things which eternally matter, and he would not be drawn from his purpose." It means that, by the example and authority of the Saviour of the world, the mission of the Christian Church is to individual men—because we don't happen to have any other kind—and that her real mission is to the souls of men. It is essential to think in world terms and undertake a world enterprise, but the whole thing will come to naught as surely as did the crusades unless the inner and individualistic element is at the heart of it all. It is absolutely right to try to save "the whole man." But it is necessary to remember that if his body is healed, his mind instructed, his economic status improved, while his soul remains unchanged by the power of the Spirit, his last state is very liable to be worse than his first. And let it be said once more

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that any effective way of saving a man's soul except by conversion is yet to be discovered. That is why a real seer has uttered the eminently wise words: "Christianity would sacrifice its divinity if it abandoned its missionary character and became a mere educational institution. . . . When the power of reclaiming the lost dies out of the church, it ceases to be a church. It may remain a useful institution, though it is most likely to become an immoral and mischievous one. Where that power remains, there, whatever is wanting, it may still be said that the tabernacle of God is with men."

In order that this all-important and divinely ordained work shall be done in this chaotic time, what shall be the message and spirit of the church? With what appeal shall men really be won to God? Where shall the emphasis be put? To answering those questions wisely and well we are all summoned.

## **CHAPTER XIV**

# **THE ETERNAL GOSPEL AND THE AGE OF RECONSTRUCTION**

If I go into one of our assemblies of praise, I find that we are still tarrying at Jerusalem, waiting for the promise of the Father. The mental attitude and spiritual pose of the modern church is Pre-Pentecostal. And in this thin and immature relationship is to be found the secret of our common weariness and impotence. We are busy invoking rather than receiving, busy asking rather than using. I think that if the Apostle Paul were to visibly enter our assembly when we are singing these strained and fervid supplications, he would wonderingly and anxiously ask, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" We need to learn the things we have known the longest. Let us assume the Pentecostal attitude of zealous and hungry reception. Above all, let us cultivate a sensitive intimacy with the Holy Spirit. He will be our sufficiency, and we shall move about in the enduement of Pentecostal power.—*J. H. Jowett.*

When we consider the Christian attitude as a whole as presented in the New Testament, the conclusion seems inevitable that on the one hand patience, forbearance, meekness, and forgiveness are characteristic of its spirit rather than resistance to or revolt against oppression and injustice, and that, on the other hand, its reliance for the progress of the kingdom of God is not on the arm of flesh but on the spirit of the living God, on moral suasion and religious influence rather than on social pressure or political action.—*Principal Garvie.*

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE ETERNAL GOSPEL AND THE AGE OF RECONSTRUCTION

ANY attempt to formulate a gospel for an age of reconstruction is foredoomed to failure, for the simple reason that the gospel for this or any other age cannot be reduced to a formula. Like life itself, it is full of paradoxes. Always it assumes forms as multitudinous as the individualities of those who proclaim it and requires emphases as varied as the individualities of those who hear it. One of the astounding things in Christian history is the way in which God can make use of widely different motives to rouse men to heroic Christian living.

Therein, let it be noted, lies the fallacy in much of the wholesale criticism of "the appeal to fear," "the appeal to selfishness," the representation of God "as a policeman," and all the other forms of the Christian message so derided just now. The important fact is, not that such preaching may be theologically sound or scriptural in its essence, but that it is psychologically wise and spiritually effective. When Phillips Brooks said,

"I would rather be a believer in the most material notions of eternal penalty and get out of that belief the hard and frightened solemnity and scrupulousness which it has to give than to hold all the sweet, broad truth to which God is now leading us and have it make life seem a playtime and the world a game," he gave unanswerable answer to every man who sneers at the fathers' conception of God while he falls far short of the fathers' consecration to God. And when Beecher said to the students at Yale, "When men have been dead without knowing it, when men have been long dead, anything that puts in them the germ of life is better than that long propriety of damnation," he not only put a quietus on a lot of our modern squeamishness against plain preaching, but he laid down one essential principle for a real message for any age, namely, the power to rouse men to decision and action.

Nevertheless, it is true that the dominant characteristic of every age determines, to a certain extent, the form of the gospel for that age. In the interpretation of the Christian ideal there must be an element of timeliness as well as an element of timelessness. No man who lacks a knowledge of or sympathy with the world of his own time can be an effective preacher.

Several years ago Arthur S. Hoyt said, "Our age has three characteristics easily discerned: its

absorbing interest in this world, its social unrest and its critical spirit." That was a splendid summary of the world situation before the war. Of the present it is not so easy to speak, for conditions are still chaotic. I believe it is fair to say, however, that it is marked by those same three tendencies, carried to the extreme, plus a clearly defined and growing reaction from each. The excesses are tragically self-evident. Practical materialism and practical atheism are rampant; religion is attacked on every side and the social unrest has become a social revolution, changing the very life of the race.

Of the widespread turning to the elemental things in religion, with its attendant demand for certainties and an inner experience, many have spoken with clearness and force. Weary of the barren abstractions of a critical and rationalistic age, and no longer viewing a childlike faith as crass credulity, a growing number are seeking the simplicities of faith and practice. And of the potentialities of unselfishness, awaiting only the stimulus of a great cause to make them divinely kinetic, the war has been the great revealer. The spectacle of a vast multitude willing to renounce everything, including life itself, for the safety and welfare of others, constitutes a something so superb that one impoverishes language to describe it. Over against the mob of madmen will-

ing to assassinate and destroy by wholesale that they may have their share of this world's goods is a growing army of heroic souls willing to die, if need be, that life may be made rich and blessed for others. There is little wonder that to all who have felt the compulsion of this selfless spirit the conventional activities of the modern church seem but aimless nothingnesses and the unheroic appeals of the modern pulpit mere moral and spiritual syllabub.

It seems to me, however, that the reaction from that fatal absorption in the things of this world and the innermost spirit of the present time are most strikingly expressed by the anonymous author of an article entitled "Whither?" which appeared in the *Atlantic*. I quote at length. This Unknown says:

"The rush of new powers across the horizon of our knowledge has made the God of our fathers seem petty and old-fashioned. In our singing we have exalted the faith of our fathers, but in our thinking we have set it one side. Their belief in prayer, their resignation to suffering, their confidence in the merits of Christ, and their fear of the consequences of sin—all seemed to us outgrown and absurd. But the pendulum has swung once more in the opposite direction. We are finding that our life is not broader but narrower. Beside theirs it is empty and shallow. It cannot

stand the acid test. . . . There is much about reform, suffrage, the fighting of Tammany, measures for the physical betterment of factory boys and girls. There are many wrongs to right, for the most part centering in the body, but in spite of my sympathy with each distinct measure and my strenuous efforts to help forward some of them, I feel great sense of lack. The horizon is near and attainable; the sky comes down like a brass bowl over our heads; I stifle in this world of nostrums, of remedies, of external cures for moral evils."

That those words were written several years ago but enhances their significance. The swing of the pendulum has been accelerated rather than stayed by the stupendous intervening events. The soul hunger, so strikingly articulate in the case of the Unknown, is becoming articulate because it is just as real in millions of other cases. "In every community there is already rising a cry for elemental religion. . . . American laymen"—yes, and an unnumbered throng outside the church—"are asserting that they want to be assured of God and immortality and the worth of righteousness. They want companionship in spiritual loneliness, comfort in hours of pain, courage in moments of moral wavering. Their souls are athirst for the Unknown and they will be satisfied with nothing save the water that comes from the

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river of God." Yes, and even where the need is not sensed at all it exists. Human life, as it is constituted to-day, with all its moral idealism and stupendous social program, is all awry, because it lacks the background of eternity and the consolations and compulsions of a loving, holy God, actively present in the souls of men. In spite of their generosity and persistent good nature and altruistic spirit men are failing to regenerate society because of the vast majority it cannot be said, as it was said of one of old, "he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." And even at the risk of seeming hypercritical, I want to say that the leaders themselves, the men who are trying to work out a programme that will give us a new earth, seem to lack that sense of intimacy with God which must characterize the truest leadership. It is all well enough to believe in "Providence," but all through this wild world conflict I have waited in vain for the throbbing expressions of dependence upon God which marked the public and private utterances of Abraham Lincoln.

That is the situation. Obviously, then, if the gospel for this new age is to be marked by timeliness as well as timelessness, it must emphasize the Eternal rather than the temporal, the personal rather than the impersonal, the inner experience as well as the outer expression of reli-

gion, and the exactingly ethical and comprehensive character of salvation. "What the work of philanthropy and the reform of industry need is the larger horizon of the view from above." What the Christian message needs is the element of largeness and otherworldliness which gives to heroic living the incentive of an infinite outlook. It would be a calamity to return to any hectic mood whose finest self-expression consists of singing oneself away to everlasting bliss. Sincere men of all beliefs and no beliefs at all have spewed that whole sickly business out of their mouths. But the existing situation will terminate in a far greater calamity unless there are restored to life the infinite worth of immortality and the horizonless scope of eternity. It is high time that men were told to look up, remembering their high estate, and, under every circumstance, and at whatever cost, live "after the power of an endless life." Amid the babel of tongues and superabundance of talk about democracy, we all need to be reminded that if we are really sons of God "our citizenship is in heaven." Men do need encouragement, and how can a pilgrim of the infinite be encouraged except by the renewal of his faith in the Home at the end of the road? Take hope out of life and you wreck life. "We cannot safely exile heaven from our moral and spiritual culture." Men do need warning—how

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sorely they need it and how little they are getting! —but how shall they be warned unless they are told in terms so plain that they cannot fail to understand, that sin persisted in terminates inevitably in conscious alienation from God, which is hell, and a hell infinitely more hideous for a being made in the image of God than all the roaring infernos created by the imagination of man? If there is one thing this mad world needs to have burned into its consciousness, it is that while God is not a policeman he is a holy and ethically exacting God, and that the man who lives an earthly, sensual, selfish life here, and then, with his soul seared by sin, plunges into the unknown, in the expectation that God will bring him out all right somehow, is a blind, fatuous fool. And, above everything else, men need the clear consciousness of God's presence, the sense of the Infinite within them. And how shall they get it unless it is made plain once more, not that there is an impersonal energy, permeating the universe, but that there is a personal God, who orders all our lives if we will but let him? The trouble with the immanence of God, as conceived by the modern man, is that it amounts to a practical pantheism, with God everywhere in general and nowhere in particular. The personal element must be put at the front in the gospel, not only by stressing anew the incontrovertible fact that "nothing but a personal

Saviour, in personal relationship with the personal human spirit, can communicate power," but also by endeavoring to restore to the soul the consciousness of the presence of a personal and transcendent God. In the deepest and truest sense it must always be true that "Christianity offers a deeper consolation than any prospect of endless life or of millennial glories. It teaches the weary and the sorrowing and the lonely to look up to heaven and to say, 'Thou, God, carest for me.' "

If it be objected that this message still lacks the heroic in motive and the social comprehensiveness demanded by the new age, let it be said that all such will be contained in the presentation of an ethical God who offers to man a salvation based upon the absolute surrender of the total personality to him and resulting in the investment of that transformed and vitalized personality in the stupendous enterprise of helping to save the world. As a matter of fact, men are willing to do anything but make that complete self-surrender, because that is the hardest thing to do and requires the greatest moral courage. And, as a matter of fact, they *must* do that, for that is the all-comprehensive act which includes all subordinate acts. I do not mean simply that unless a man is thoroughly converted he will go to hell, but the equally important fact that, with-

out a growing body of heroic souls, who, through spiritual conflict, have put on the form of righteousness, this world will be a hell. "Consecration to the will of God, as Christ conceives the matter, covers all—this supreme giving of the self includes all subordinate givings." And there will be no lack of the heroic or of opportunities for its manifestation if that surrender is made. I still believe, and see no valid reason for changing my belief, that the greatest constraining and transforming force which can be brought to bear upon the hearts and consciences of men is not the call to help their fellow men but the call to surrender themselves to God. The man who really undertakes to fulfill the injunction of Christ, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me," will find his life crammed with the heroic, filled with adventure of the highest order, and replete with opportunities for the sublimest sacrifice. Conversion—real conversion—is not a way of escape from the world: it is the only way into the noblest service to the world. Livingstone's life motive, rightly interpreted and rigidly applied, is big enough and compelling enough to grip the hardest and most daring spirit of these daring times: "I will place no value on anything I have, or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of Christ. If anything I have will ad-

vance the interests of that kingdom, it shall be given away or kept only as by giving or keeping it I may promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes in time and eternity." In other words—and the modern pulpit should ransack the riches of its inspired genius to make men see and feel this truth—the strong man who falls on his face before God in Christ and cries from the depths of his aroused consciousness, "Thy will be done," is taking the sure, the only path to heroic living and world service. "This petition includes every good for every son of man—all high enterprise and all great goals. All justice, all truths, all beauty, all merciful ministry, are here inclosed—all the triumphs of science, of literature, of art, of music, of philanthropy, of highest spiritual endeavor—the vision of the city beautiful, the city honest, the city serving, the vision of a redeemed humanity sharing in the very life of God." Thus, in his address on "The Essence of Life," does Henry Churchill King give us the very essence of the Christian ideal.

After all has been said and done, however, I wonder if the whole matter of "adapting" the gospel to the peculiar needs of the age is not bulking too large in our thinking. I wonder if we are not trying to accomplish by mechanics that which can be accomplished only by dynamics, to bring about by secondary causes that which can

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be brought about only by primary causes. In plain words, aren't we fussing too much about the manward side of the business and failing to give due attention to the Godward? There is vast significance for the minister of to-day in the well-known experience of Thomas Chalmers, the greatest preacher Scotland has produced in over two hundred years. For years he preached with brilliancy and impetuous eloquence on all the phases of morality and social reform, but without effect. Then he fell ill, had a profound personal religious experience—returned to his pulpit to preach, not “Do this and live,” but “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved”; and lo! his ministry was transfigured. As he himself put it: “During the whole of that period in which I made no attempt against the natural enmity of the mind to God, I certainly did press the reformation of honor and truth and integrity among my people, but I never once heard of such reformation having been effected among them. I am not sensible that all the vehemence with which I urged the virtues and the proprieties of social life had the weight of a feather on the moral habits of parishioners. And it was not till I got impressed by the utter alienation of the heart in all its desires and affections from God; *it was not till reconciliation to him became the distinct and the prominent object of*

*my ministerial exertions; it was not till the free offer of forgiveness through the blood of Christ was urged upon their acceptance, and the Holy Spirit given through the channel of Christ's mediation to all who ask him was set before them as the unceasing object of their dependence and prayers, that I ever heard of any of those subordinate reformations which I aforetime made the earnest and the zealous, but, I am afraid, at the same time, the ultimate object of my earlier ministrations.* [The italics are mine.] You have taught me that to preach Christ is the only effective way of preaching morality in all its branches."

I said that this extraordinary experience has great value just now for the individual preacher. It has vast value for the whole Church of God. Surely, we have here another demonstration of the too frequently forgotten fact that Christianity's conquest of hostile forces and healing ministry to a sin-sick world are not to be attained by the wisdom of this world. And surely we have valid testimony to the fact that a man in the pulpit, speaking out of a vital experience of him who is able to save to the uttermost, and a Church of the Living God, filled with the Life of the Spirit, and ministering to men in the manifestation of that Life, will change the face of the world, in spite of minor faults in the form of the message and in attempted methods of service. Do not

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tell me that this conclusion is cheap and evasive and savors of fanatical pietism. If George Gordon is right when he says we are failing because "the modern man is a poor traditionalist, a pale Protestant, a literal Christian, minus the central idea of the Christian faith, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit," then I am right when I say that the gospel for this age of reconstruction must, above everything else, be a gospel of redemption through faith in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that the church, to function effectively, as the experts put it, must be a church composed of men and women who are honestly, actually dominated and directed by the Holy Spirit. I do not affirm that this is all we need. I do affirm that this is our basic and outstanding need.

In my papers I found a clipping containing a statement which seems to me to sum up the whole matter. I have no means of identifying the author. But what of it? Let an Unknown state the satisfaction of a need to which the other Unknown gave such exquisite expression. Here are his words:

"The gospel of the Spirit is the supreme need of the church to-day. There never was a time when the church was so busily engaged in such a multitude of outward tasks, and hardly a time, either, when the church was more inwardly rest-

less, more spiritually dissatisfied and in many places more desperately inefficient. The danger of her practicalness is its superficiality. She is playing Martha in our generation. The Master has come; she rises to serve him, that his will should be done in government, in home and school, in all philanthropy and good citizenship; these are her anxieties. It is all noble and good, springing from Christian instincts, undeniably sublime, but what if in our business to do things for him we lose the attentive ear that listens to him and the ready heart that groweth like him? What if, like children, we fall to running many errands for a Father whom we do not inwardly know; and what if amid the clatter of our hurrying footsteps the Master once more were saying, 'Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful'? For the real power of the church has never been the multitude of her tasks, but the quality of her souls; the real business of the church has never been the multiplication of quantity in service, but the production of quality in men. That men should be born anew, should become the organs and instruments of vaster spiritual life of God—that is *the* central business of the church, the biggest business of the world. . . . The transcendent God and the perfect Son can make a true theology and a lofty ethic, but not a deep religion.

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*God the Father revealed in God the Son* must somehow become God the Spirit in us. The interpretation of this complete religious experience, crowned in the conscious inward communion of the living God, is the great task of the church. This is the preaching of the Holy Spirit. Nor is it impossible even with the practical mind of the modern man to make it constrainingly clear."

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